

Rev Ernest R Anderton.

DISCIPLESHIP

BOOKS BY LESLIE D. WEATHERHEAD

DISCIPLESHIP

HIS LIFE AND OURS

THE TRANSFORMING FRIENDSHIP

JESUS AND OURSELVES

DISCIPLESHIP



LESLIE D. WEATHERHEAD



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WEATHERHEAD
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This book is dedicated to my friend

RICHARD SOLOMON

whose life and service have done so much to
extend the kingdom of God at home and abroad,
in gratitude for the privilege of his friendship
and in token of my affection and esteem.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE following pages contain the substance of a series of addresses given to some three hundred young people gathered at the Missionary School at Swanwick during Whit-week, 1933. In yielding to the request that they should be printed, it is essential to ask the reader to bear in mind that they were spoken addresses, and when they were given, it was not contemplated that they would be printed. I am greatly indebted to Miss E. Spencer, of the Methodist Mission House staff, who was good enough to take them down in shorthand and then type them for me. This work of hers has been the basis on which I have worked in rewriting them, though here and there material has been added and ideas more fully worked out.

I want to acknowledge also with deep gratitude my debt to my beloved father-in-law, the Rev. Arthur Triggs, who once more with characteristic ability and thoroughness has read the proofs and made suggestions which I have adopted with avidity.

A further apology is essential in that some of the matter in the following pages appears in different form elsewhere in various writings of mine. Naturally, when speaking on certain subjects again and again, one can hardly avoid expressing a point of view in similar terms, and to

cut out what may have appeared in other writings would make this little book an incorrect record of what was said. For instance, a list of things which often stand between the soul and God is incorporated in the first address from Chapter VII of my last book, *How Can I Find God?*

The words which form the chapter headings are words which are being very much emphasized at present by the Oxford Group Movement, to which I, personally, owe a great debt. Yet this book is not a book on the Oxford Group Movement. In the lectures given, no reference was made to it. I am sure that movement does not desire to patent, as it were, these special words which are the keynotes of any real revival of religion. Such a revival is now gloriously happening in many parts of the country through the medium of not only the Oxford Group, but the Cambridge Group Movement and the Methodist Fellowship Group, and in many other ways also. For myself, I believe that we are at the beginning of a revival which may become as important as that linked with the names of John and Charles Wesley, in which the Methodist Church was born. The following talks seek to relate these keywords to our lives without discussing the technique of any particular movement.

The questions which the members of the Whit-week School discussed each day are printed at the end of the book in the hope that groups all over the country may find them helpful in their discussions. Perhaps I may just add that it seems to me

important that the work of the groups should not be a discussion of a subject of merely theological interest, but should be brought down to the practical issues of daily life. Group work does not realize its full possibility if purely intellectual problems are solved, or, what often happens, lifted up and put down in another place. The intellectual background of our religious experience is very important. But the ideal of Group Fellowship is that each member should find help in the difficult business of living, and in the back of everyone's mind there should be one fundamental question: "How can I find or deepen the experience of Christ which is offered in the New Testament, and how can I pass it on?"

LESLIE D. WEATHERHEAD.

CHAPTER I
SURRENDER

“The crisis of self-surrender has always been, and must always be, regarded as the vital turning point of the religious life.”—WILLIAM JAMES.

CHAPTER I

SURRENDER

THE glorious offer of the New Testament is that of a transforming, communicable sense of the power and presence of God. It is an experience characterized by a liberating sense of forgiveness and offered to everyone, an experience that changes life, and an experience which we want to pass on to others. Christ's parables, in the main, are concerned with the passionate desire of God that we should be brought into this experience (we think of the parables of the good shepherd, the lost coin, and the prodigal son) and the nature of the experience when we obtain it. (We think of the parables of the pearl of great price and the hidden treasure.)

Paul's metaphors are nearly all employed with the same end in view. Something happens in the human soul which is done by God; which man, of himself, cannot achieve, since even Paul, whose mood one would interpret with the active voice, always uses the passive voice when he is talking about it, and says he is changed, is conformed, is justified, is raised up, is born, and speaks of men passing from death to life, darkness to light, slavery to sonship, prison to liberty; things we cannot do for ourselves.

The message of the New Testament is that the most important thing in the world is that we should get our relationship right with God and receive this transforming experience. No hereditary Christianity, such as some of us here possess, is a substitute for it. No doing good to others, no life dedicated to the service of humanity or passed in what men call "playing the game" will do. Men often say to us: "I don't see what religion matters as long as we are doing good and paying our way and being kind and loving and living a moral life. That is surely all God demands." The point is not what God demands, but what Christ offers. And he offers something which is as different from that—which Paul would have called the righteousness of the law—as light is different from darkness. Paul dismisses such behavior with contempt as the things any decent man does. And the man who says, "What else is expected from me?" is like a blind man saying, "As long as I walk down the street without bumping into other people what else is demanded from me?" We know that what he is missing is a world of light and color.

The marks of this tremendous experience are at least five: 1. The sense of the forgiveness of sins—the sense that whatever has been between you and God has gone. Not a sense that a penalty has been remitted; but a definite sense that a relationship is restored; a tremendous sense that now there is nothing between you and God. 2. There comes a new sense of power, especially power over

sin. We are enabled to do and be what seemed impossible. 3. There is a new sense of peace. An inner serenity independent of outward circumstance, not dependent on freedom from engagements, but on a quiet heart. 4. There is a new infectious gayety of spirit, a joy that is also independent of circumstance and not merely dependent on health, wealth, or high spirits. 5. The greatest test of all: that of an outgoing love for others, including those who criticize, condemn, and misunderstand us.

Further, the experience, if truly possessed, is something which others long for when they see it, and is something which we want to pass on.

Let us be very honest, even analytical, with ourselves by asking ourselves one or two questions. Have we ever really come into this new world which Christ offers? In the General Thanksgiving we praise him for our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life, but above all, for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. Could we honestly make a heap, as it were, of all the blessings of this life—our health, our friendships, our jobs, our possessions, our holidays, our books, our amusements—and put them all on one side and say, quite honestly, “But, above all, for Him”? Have we got something that is a pearl of such great price that if it came to the worst, we should really honestly feel that it were better to lose everything else in the world rather than that? Have we got something from Christ which others long for

when they see it in us? When people see us, do they say: "I would give anything to be like that. I wish I had got what he has got," not meaning our health and high spirits and sanguine temperament, but meaning that which we have received from Christ? We may notice, in passing, that that is what characterized the early church as its members went through the pagan world. Paganism looked astonished and said, "These people have got no money, no prestige, no social status, but they have got what all the world is seeking—the secret of the mastery of the art of living." Have we got something which we long that others should have? These are questions which test whether we are, in any sense, finding what the New Testament offers. We may have *an* experience of God without satisfying these tests. If we have seen him in the beauties of creation; if we have been inspired by art or music or literature, we have had *an* experience of God. But what the New Testament offers is a changed and radiant life.

I am just a little afraid of the way some folk talk about an experience of Christ. They call it "It" and say, "Have you got it?" until we feel that there is something almost like a brown-paper parcel of standard shape and size which we could pass to one another. Different people will have different experiences of Christ. He will come to them in different ways, and though we may roughly expect to see certain results, they must not be pressed. "Joy," for instance, may truly be

possessed by some hearts which never experience a "bubbly feeling."

If we do not possess this experience, do not let us go hectically looking for an experience. This is to court two dangers. The first is the danger of inventing one, and the second is the danger of depression that we have not got one. It is rather dangerous, to hectically seek an experience such as someone else has. It so often leads either to a kind of pretense, or else we give up, saying, "Well, nothing ever happens to me like that."

Let us look at the logic of the situation. There can be no doubt that the teaching of the New Testament is that God is seeking us with a passion and constancy which put to shame any search we may make for him. When we talk about seeking God, we really misrepresent the situation, as though God were an elusive Person who had to be hunted. But he is the "Hound of Heaven" tirelessly on our track, and instead of talking so much about finding God we ought to be talking about being found by God. We can even misunderstand the words, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," for they can be made to sound as though a rather reluctant God had to be sought out and disturbed and pleaded with and besought to come to our rescue. What we want to ask God to show us, and what we want to seek, are those things which stand between us and the incoming tide of the Spirit. Somewhere in our nature, to keep the figure, there is a sluice gate that has got

shut so that the rushing waters pass by instead of sweeping into the stagnant backwater of our lives, cleansing and refreshing and bringing new life in all the secret places of the soul. And if our mind, at once, does not leap to a realization of what that sluice gate actually is, we must remember that it is the nature of the mind to give itself a spurious ease by the process which the psychologists call rationalization. By rationalization we mean giving a false reason when the true reason is distasteful. So we have known a breathless old lady, climbing a mountain, who cannot go any farther and who says, "I think this is the best spot from which to see the view." Remember though that rationalization is often unconscious. We may honestly think that we are giving the true reason. The mind will teach us to deceive ourselves if the true reason is distasteful and destructive of mental peace.

If you have had any dealings with the human heart, you will know how these obstructions to the incoming Spirit of God can slip into the unconscious, until we do not realize that we are making any resistance against him whatever. Our bad temper becomes righteous indignation. Our stubbornness and obstinacy become determination. Our selfish pride becomes the rights to which we are entitled. Our faulty relationships with others are glossed over by some such words as "I have to keep him in his place," or "I gave him a piece of my mind," or "I thought it was best for him that I should tell him exactly what I

thought," or "You have to stand up for yourself in these days."

The logic, then, is surely unanswerable: if God is seeking us and we are not found of him, the stop is on our side. If our minds do not leap, at once, to the point at which we have never made surrender, it is probably because we have rationalized on that point, and our "search for God" must become our search for the thing that is holding him back. We can do this partly by self-analysis, partly by prayer, and partly by asking the honest help of carefully chosen friends.

Let me indicate briefly some of the things which get in the way:

1. We can be quite sure that very often it is a disguised selfishness. Self is too much in the picture. Even in our prayers we are praying largely for ourselves. When we are doing something for others, it becomes a subtle form of self-flattery and we pat ourselves on the back for doing it. When we engage in any kind of service we are watching ourselves with one eye. "Am I going to get anything out of this?" or "Am I going to appear in this to advantage?" In other words, the whole life revolves around the self, the life is egocentric instead of theocentric. And we shall only find God when he shows us how to put ourselves right out of the picture, only asking for his glory—willing even to look to be fools and to be unpopular and to be lonely if his purposes can be achieved and his glory consummated.

2. The second thing that gets in our way is a

love of sin going hand in hand with a love of righteousness. We pray to be delivered from the sins without remembering that sin only grows in the heart that gives it room. What so often happens is that in certain moods of the soul we want God, and within twenty-four hours we want sin even more. We must ask him to show us the nature of sin, how it blinds us, and binds us, and wounds him, so that we come to hate it with our whole being instead of with half our mind. The shut door for many lives is a secret love of some form of sin which is being rationalized by the conscience.

3. Another door that we shut against God is the fear of what people will say and think. One finds this again and again in business life. A youngster goes from school to an office with high ideals and with earnest desires to live a Christian life; but it is very hard to be good by yourself. The youngster, whether boy or girl, does not want to be thought pious or goody-goody; so when the dirty story goes round, rather shamefacedly, he laughs. He puts a shilling on a horse. With the rest he gradually begins to rationalize his conduct by phrases like "Everybody does it," and "Being a sport," and so on. We must ask Christ to make us ready to brave anything; not to be afraid of what people will say or think, once we are sure what is the right thing to do.

4. Another door that we shut against him is just a suspicion that, after all, the worldling is having a better time than we are. When a man is

in process of being found by God, he is really standing between two worlds; the world of Satan and the world of God. He is not bad enough to be completely happy in the world of Satan. He is not good enough to be completely happy in the world of God. When he sees the lovable happy pagan enjoying himself to the full, he almost feels affronted. "How dare you be so happy living a life of worldliness when I who am trying to be a Christian am not a bit happy?" The Christian, indeed, has got his bad name for being a wet blanket and for being censorious of worldliness because he is not Christian enough to be quite in God's world, and his criticism of worldliness is inverted envy, which, by the way, is the basis of so much criticism. When a man has entirely surrendered and is completely in God's world, his attitude to the worldling is not criticism but a great longing, mixed with pity; a great longing to bring all into the marvelous experience which he has found.

5. A fifth door that we shut against God is a shunning of the discipline of keeping in God's world. And here we have the reason why many who once found God have now nothing that is really vital in their lives. The churches are full of people who, thirty or forty years ago, had a living, vital experience of God. In the old phrase they were "converted"; in the new phrase they made their "surrender." But they are like astronomers photographing a star who make no allowance for the revolution of the earth. When

✓ an astronomer photographs a star, he has to turn his telescope on the star till the light from it falls through the lens on to the photographic plate below. But when this has been done, he must remember that though the star is a fixed star the earth is continually revolving and will spoil his adjustment. And it requires a great deal of care to readjust continually if the photograph is to be a picture of the star. There are those who turned their lives to Christ and had a real experience, but now their experience never sets anybody else on fire because they themselves are not on fire with it. Their Christian experience is the memory of something beautiful that happened twenty or thirty years ago. Every day there must be the readjustment to allow for the earthly things if our hearts are to become a picture of the star.

6. The sixth thing that holds us back is that we sometimes hide under the services of the church. Willing to serve in the church or to go to services or to hold office is made a substitute for an experience that would be surgical and demanding. I do want to plead for self-analysis here. You cannot stand up against the white throne on the Day of Judgment and tell God that you held office in his church. He wants *you* and not the services you render. First your Father's arms, then your Father's errands.

7. The seventh evasion is the intellectual difficulty: the man who says that he is kept from surrender by intellectual problems. Some of us who spend a lot of time straightening out intellectual

problems find that at bottom a man is hiding, as it were, in the dugout of his intellectual problem. You drive him from one dugout and he takes refuge in another. Answer his question about the virgin birth and he talks to you about the resurrection. At last, after many weary hours, you find that his real problem is a moral one; probably some form of selfishness, or self-indulgence.

8. A final hiding place from God, and one of the deepest, is our familiarity with the words which describe great experiences. The words which describe them are familiar, but we are strangers to the experiences. One of the greatest dangers of the Christian home is that we are so inoculated with small doses of Christianity that we cannot catch the big thing, and because we have been brought up as Christians we think that what we have found is all there is to have. We must be awake to the possibility that our very familiarity with the New Testament and the gospel message has got between us and the reality of God.

I shall never forget when my second boy, a baby of five weeks old, was lying dangerously ill. The general practitioner was much concerned. I can see her now turning from the child to me and saying: "He is frightfully ill; I can tell you that much, but I cannot find out what is the matter with him. We must have a specialist." One of the nightmares of my life was the search for that specialist that night; but at last, toward midnight, he came. I can see him bending over the body of the child, the fingers of his hand outstretched as

though they were eyes that could see through the skin. Then he put his finger on the child's body and said to the doctor, "That is where the mischief lies." The child was wrapped in a blanket, put in his car, taken to a nursing home, operated on, and in a few days had entered into a new kingdom of health.

It may be that you yourself can put your finger on that thing which has never been surrendered, on that point on which you are saying "No" to God. If so, do not talk about looking for God until you have got that right. If not, you must ask that great Surgeon of the soul to put his finger on the spot, and to show you what it is in your life that is holding you back from this tremendous experience which makes Christianity a gospel and the most powerful transforming influence in the world. Do give up playing about with religion and yielding a tepid acquiescence to the Wearer of the crown of thorns!

Look finally at this picture. Here is a crowd of people at Capernaum listening to Jesus. On the outskirts of that crowd is a man, past middle age, whose face we can tenderly read. You notice the lines under his eyes; you notice that he drops his eyes if anybody looks keenly at him. You notice that the corners of his mouth turn down and there are heavy lines there too. You notice the stooping figure and the shuffling gait as he walks homeward when the crowd breaks up. You catch the glint of tears in his eyes. This man is despised by everybody, and that has gone on so long that he despises

himself. The name of his profession is a term of abuse. He is a taxgatherer. He has stooped to the depths at which a man takes money from his own countrymen and hands it over to the hated invader, Rome. This man's name is Matthew. But when he listened to Jesus, something that was still splendid and not quite dead fluttered within his breast, and as he is going home he is saying to himself: "Yes, it was very beautiful and I should love to be like that, but I am too old. The tracks of habit are too deep, and how should I get my living and what would people say?" He has caught a glimpse of the world that Christ offers, but rather sadly he is shutting the gates, not passing through them. And heavily he turns back to his books, slipping back into the groove that was becoming a grave, a grave of a soul. "But as Jesus passed by he saw Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom." A shadow fell across Matthew's ledger onto a page on which, but recently, the tears of a man growing old had made the ink run. Matthew looked up into the eyes that are the homes of all men's dreams, and looking into the face of Jesus he realized in a flash two things: that Jesus believed in him and that Jesus knew what was keeping him back. Knowing his worst, Jesus believed in his best. The finger of the Great Physician went unerringly to the spot. The eyes of Jesus were saying, "This is what is stopping you." And then a voice that drove out all his fear—fears of the past, fears of the present, fears of the future; they all fell away. A voice that breathed

incredible strength, a voice that took responsibility for all consequences, said to him, "Follow me." And Matthew went through the gates into the new world that Christ offered, the world of power and joy and peace and love. It contained martyrdom, but it contained Jesus, so nothing else mattered. That very day Matthew was with Jesus in paradise. In the same way, on this day, he calls you. What are you going to do?

CHAPTER II
SHARING

“Confess therefore your sins one to another,
and pray for one another, that ye may be healed.”

—SAINT JAMES.

CHAPTER II

SHARING

FIRST, five minutes' psychology. On this table before me is a glass of water. If it is not rude to liken your mind to anything so watery, think of the glass of water as your mind. The surface of the water is the area of the mind which we call consciousness. We will imagine a number of things floating on the top of the water. Of all these things you are conscious. I will imagine, optimistically, that the largest is the message I am trying to get over to you. But you are also conscious of the hardness of the seats, of the warm summer morning, and, perhaps, of the fact that the man sitting next to you has been eating peppermints recently.

Directly below this level is the area of the subconscious, say an inch down the glass. In this stratum of the mind are contained the impressions and memories which we can bring to the surface, that is, to the conscious level, if we so desire. You are not thinking, at this moment, of what you had for breakfast: that is, I hope you are not, unless suddenly it is giving you "many happy returns." Yet, by a slight effort, you recall that it was bacon and tomato. You are not thinking, at the moment, of the name of your landlady last summer

holiday. Now, as soon as I say this, it has come up to the surface. By various dodges, depending on the law of the association of ideas, it is possible to bring to the surface memories going far back into our earlier history. We notice that scents and sounds have also this power of bringing to consciousness something that was subconscious.

Below the subconscious area of the mind is the unconscious; and here I want a glass of water that goes down to the floor. The unconscious is, of course, by far the greatest area of the mind, for here are stored all the impressions and memories which the mind has ever received; and if there were time, it would be interesting to show that, in a real sense, the mind never forgets anything. When we say a thing is forgotten we mean that it is so deep in the mind that it cannot be recovered to consciousness. But in a real sense nothing is ever forgotten. Every impression the mind has ever received is still in the mind and, given a strong enough stimulus, it can be recovered. Experiments in hypnosis provide very illuminating evidence on this point. If a person is capable of being very deeply hypnotized, I have found it possible to bring back memories, to an adult mind, of things which happened as early as the third year of life.

But the point I want to make here is this, that although a memory sinks into the unconscious it may still function. It is as though something dropped to the bottom of the water and then sent up bubbles into consciousness. We may not know

what it is that is giving rise to these bubbles, and so we have the following strange situation: a man may have symptoms in consciousness: inhibitions, or doubts, or fears, the origin of which he does not know. If we question him, he will tell us he does not know. The truth is that something is buried deep in the mind with which the mind is finding it difficult to deal.

I must here resort to another kind of illustration. Many a man is going about to-day with shrapnel in his lungs. If that shrapnel happens to be clean, the lungs deal with it in an interesting way. Tissues harden round the shrapnel and, although that little bit of lung is not being used, no serious trouble results. But if that shrapnel were dirty, it would set up inflammation in the lung and the shrapnel would have to be removed. Many people are suffering psychologically because incidents which entered the mind years ago were not clean. There was emotion adhering to them which has set up a kind of inflammation in the unconscious of which only the pus is discernible. And a good deal of psychological treatment consists in opening up the mind to bring to the surface the offending situation so that the dirty emotion, if the term may be allowed, can be removed and redirected elsewhere.

All this is intended to help us understand the great importance of sharing. When a sin is committed, we are conscious of it. Then it sinks into the subconscious and we can remember it if we want to. Finally it sinks into the unconscious and

we cannot remember it. If we have a living sense of forgiveness for our sins, they are cleansed and then the mind can deal with them. They will never trouble us any more. But sins which are unforgiven, especially sins against another which produce a wrong relationship, if not made right, sink into the unconscious together with emotions which are likely to give rise to further trouble. The nonreligious psychologists have not yet recognized that the basic trouble of a good many neuroses is sin, unforgiven, and functioning deep in the unconscious. In their language the experience, when the sin was committed, was traumatic. It was a wound in the mind, and the wound is not clean and is suppurating deep in the personality. Sin is a very fruitful cause of nervous breakdown.

You will say to me: "Well, then, it is quite easy to see what we must do. When we sin, we must get forgiveness." But getting forgiveness is not as easy as it sounds, not because forgiveness is not offered, but because it is hard to accept it with a sense of reality. When a man has sinned deeply, he may throw himself at the side of his bed and ask God for forgiveness; but shall we not all be ready to admit that it is very difficult to rise up from one's bedside feeling that anything has happened? Therefore, one of the most valuable things the soul can do is, in MacDougall's phrase, to "exteriorize its rottenness," and, in the language of the Oxford Groups, to share it with another.

I should like to recount briefly an experience of my own, if only to show that I have taken my own

medicine. When I was first challenged by the Oxford Groups I went away into Wales on a holiday, and having time there for meditation and prayer, a great sense of personal failure came over me. My church was full, the collections were increasing, every branch of the church seemed flourishing, and I could not think of any person with whom my relationships were wrong, but I felt that these things were being said to me by the devil; that although people's lives were being changed at least every month, my life was becoming self-satisfied and egocentric and that big chunks of my work were being done with very mixed motives. I wrote to a saintly doctor I know, who had been changed by the Oxford Group Movement, and he made a considerable journey to meet me in a Liverpool hotel. There I poured out to him all the unrest and dissatisfaction and sense of sin which possessed me. I am not ashamed to add that this was not done without emotion, emotion which had been bottled up and which had been part of the cause of my unrest. In that Liverpool hotel I made a new surrender of my life to God and came back to the most wonderful twelve months I have ever known in my ministry. In passing, I would like to suggest to ministers the tremendous value, apart from all psychological training, of being prepared to listen while people pour out their sins, and the value of being ready, if led to do so, to share one's own sense of sin with them. I am not a Roman Catholic, but I am psychologist enough to see that

there is a tremendous value in the confessional. A person can pour out all the hidden contents of his heart, the things that worry him and the sins that bring him low, knowing that no word he says will go further without his permission, that the priest is a person of experience who, for that very reason, will be able to help him. The confessor knows also that the priest will make real to him the forgiveness of God, and that his sins, because exteriorized and spoken about to a human person, can be dealt with in a way that is so very difficult if we confess our sins to God only. I have known men, the slaves of certain sins for years, who have found release at once when they have shared those sins with another person. The sin then goes down to the bottom of the mind and is absorbed by the mind. What a different thing it is to get a speck of sand in the eye and a speck of sugar! With a speck of sand there is no peace till we get it out, but the waters of the eye can deal with the speck of sugar. Sharing turns the irritant sand into the soluble sugar and the mind is free from those conscious irritations which are the result of causes of which we are unconscious.

Sharing, then, is to be commended definitely because it exteriorizes our rottenness and because it makes the pardon of God real. Following this process, God puts our sins behind his back and remembers them no more forever, and we should put them behind our back and think of them no more forever; except that in certain cases we should be prepared, if led to do so, to help an-

other who is troubled by the sin that so wounded us by saying: "I also had this thing to face. I shared it, God forgave it, and he has given me victory over it, and he can do the same for you."

But in this matter of sharing we want to be rather careful to avoid certain dangers. We should choose carefully the person to whom we are going to confess. He need not, of course, be a minister, and, in the main, it is a good rule to confess to a person of the same sex, unless a person with special qualifications is the obvious person to whom to go. Further, I do not think we should confess the same sin twice. By this I mean the same happening. If we fall into the same kind of sin again, then repeated confession may be indicated. But it is important to say that we ought not to go about talking about our sins to all who will listen, for that is to get an egotistical kick out of being an interesting case. Doctor Maltby, commenting on Paul's word to the Colossians, "Ye are dead unto sin," added the illuminating advice: "Don't walk about after your own funeral. It is not nice." It is also important to say that we should not confess our sins in detail to a group of people. To do this might be to teach members of the group new sins. It is always fraught with the danger of providing the minds of others with morbid stuff out of which to make fantasies, and it is further fraught with the very real danger of highly coloring our sinful experiences so as to be interesting to ourselves and to others. Indeed, it is almost impossible to tell the same story of a sin

several times without adding a few artistic touches. I can remember being in a group where a man told a story of a fall, and certainly of subsequent recovery, but when he had finished, another man got up as though to say: "You may think that is a very bad sin, but I have done something much worse than that," and I can remember how eagerly we all turned to this much more exciting incident. A real wife-beater was much more thrilling than a milk-and-water person whose sins were so dull and uninteresting! The whole group really began to commit sin because it was taking a morbid interest in the sins of another. And I realize now that one of us ought to have stopped the recital in its early stages, because the reciter, though his motive may have been a good one as far as he saw it, was far too interested in himself. All that should be related *to a group* should be the conquest of sin through the power of Christ; and in that the telling of this experience Christ's power should be magnified; the sin only referred to in general terms and all detail cut out. Even such a recital should be given sparingly. It is so frightfully easy to become an exhibit, a case, a trophy.

Our Roman Catholic friends have spoiled the idea of confession for some of us by making it habitual when it should be occasional, by enforcing it when it should be spontaneous and voluntary, and by making it, or allowing it to be made, a substitute for real penitence, and thus bringing about a light and loose way of thinking about sin. But we must not miss the value of a treatment

because we believe some have misused it, and we must not be so foolish as to run away from the undoubted values of confession by being frightened by the bogey called Rome. When a practice is as widespread as is confession, there is sure to be a true value in it, and people who attend the Free Churches ought to have, and be encouraged to have, everything that is of value in the Roman confessional. I think it is far finer that confession should be made to one who is himself ready, if that is the right thing to do, to confess. Those who fall into certain kinds of sin often feel most terribly out-caste and lonely. They frequently imagine that they are worse than anyone else. I believe that they are entitled to the comfort that comes from knowing two things: that whatever they have done, God is willing to forgive them, to restore the relationship as though nothing had happened, and, secondly, that no sin has ever been committed that others have not committed also whom he has forgiven and healed.

But the emphasis behind all our sharing must not be on our sin, or even on our victory over sin, but on his endless mercy and grace. All through the New Testament the glorious theme runs, "He is able," "He is able," "He is able." And the writers do not say, "Here are ten reasons for believing in the forgiveness of sins;" they say: "This is what he did for me. This is what he will do for us all." Christian's experience may be that of every man: "So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up with the cross his burden loosed

from off his shoulders and fell from his back and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulcher, where it fell in and *I saw it no more.*"

I want people to feel that the past is over and done with, and so long as any restitution possible has been made I want people to feel that past sin no longer stands between them and God. I want people to feel that the sky is washed clean for them, that they can begin a new life, taking something that is offered them, relying on something that he can do within. Why do we go on sinning and sinning, and hating ourselves, and repressing our sins instead of confessing them, and trying so hard to forget them; trying so desperately to behave as though they were not still worrying us, pushing back the skeleton in the closet from which so constantly it emerges like some horrid thing that can clasp its bony fingers round our throat until we are sick and suffocated with sin, until we hardly dare be left for half an hour, knowing scarcely a moment's peace, growing peevish, irritable, and ill-tempered? "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Are you going back to your old life, seeking to forget sin, to cover it up, to fill your time with things that can act like the trees in Eden and help you to hide from God? Are you going to say that first recorded word of man to God: "I heard thy voice . . . I was afraid . . . I hid myself," or will you let him come into your life and let his

wounded fingers unloose the bonds of sin that bind you and throw them behind his back forever; let his boundless grace enter into your life and make it what, in your best moment, you want it to be? Will you say to him in words of utter surrender—with your whole being open to his gaze—that last recorded word of man to God, “Even so come, Lord Jesus”?

CHAPTER III
THE QUIET TIME

“You must at all costs make quiet time. Give up work if need be. Your influence finally depends upon your own first-hand knowledge of the unseen world, and on your experience of prayer. Love and sympathy and tact and insight are born of prayer.”—FORBES ROBINSON.

CHAPTER III

THE QUIET TIME

SINCE our Master himself found it essential to rise early in the morning to pray, and jealously to guard time for quiet meditation, we may safely say that it is impossible for his followers to manage the difficult business of living without taking time, jealously guarded, to look up into the face of God, to offer our lives afresh to him, to seek guidance for the day before us, to listen to his voice and to lift up our hearts in petition and intercession.

We notice that Jesus does not say, "*If* you pray." He says, "*When* you pray." He takes it for granted that prayer will be part of our life; and it might help us to remember that if we made an appointment with our dentist, we should keep it, whatever we felt like, and that we should be prepared to give ourselves up to God for some time each day as though we had an appointment with him, and keep that appointment whatever we happened to feel like, just as we should have to keep an appointment with a human person.

Indeed, the very health of the soul—and as I should claim, the body also, especially the nervous system—depends on our maintaining this quiet time regularly. I know from my own failures that

it is absolutely essential. A great musician said: "If I stop practicing for one day, I know it. If I stop practicing for two days, my closest friends know it. If I stop for three, the connoisseurs would know it. If I stopped for four days, the world would know it." Those of us who are busy, probably realize that we have only to stop our communion with God for a very short time and we become moody, irritable, and depressed. Health is correspondence with environment. The health of the body depends on the correspondence of the body with its physical environment. Lack of air, and the health of my lungs fails. Lack of light, and the health of my eyes slowly disappears. The health of my mind is its correspondence with the world of ideas. When that correspondence is interrupted, the health of the mind suffers. One man is afraid of the dark, another man thinks somebody is following him. He has false ideas and the health of his mind is disturbed. In a similar way the health of the soul is the maintenance of a correspondence between the soul and its environment, which is God. Disturb that correspondence and the health of the soul suffers. And since no part of an organization can be truly healthy if any part is in a state of disease, body and mind will, to some extent, suffer because the soul is thrown out of its true relation to God.

Most of us will agree with all this. Our difficulty may, however, have become that of making a pretense of prayer. We throw ourselves at the side of a bed for two minutes before we go down

to breakfast and three minutes before we get into bed. We say something that we have been saying for the last ten or fifteen years; we convince ourselves that we have said our prayers and wonder why prayer seems to count for so little. I implore the reader of these pages not to stop one habit until he has established a better one; but I do also ask him to consider whether he can say that prayer counts for little in his life when he has given it that kind of trial. A bedroom is not the best place in the world in which to pray. The bed is almost sure to make a powerful suggestion that we ought not to have left it or that we ought to be getting back into it, and a hurried moment before breakfast, or a time when mind and body are both tired, is certainly not an ideal time for prayer.

In a gathering of my church, four hundred young people who met one memorable week-end to discuss the reason why people did not pray, came almost unanimously to two conclusions. First, that people gave up prayer because they felt that no one was there, that it was like talking to the wall, that it seemed to make no difference. And, second, that when they started to pray, their mind wandered all over the place. I should like to deal with these two problems in a very practical way:

Regarding the difficulty of feeling that no one is there. When people make this objection, I feel very tempted to ask them what they expect to happen, and generally find that they expect to feel what I call "Sunday nightish," and they are dis-

appointed if there is no emotional reaction to their attempt at prayer. Quite candidly, I also like to feel different after a quiet time. When this happens, I certainly regard it as a very blessed reward. But I have had to tell myself and, therefore, am bold to suggest to you, that it is not fair that we should take our spiritual temperature with the thermometer of feeling. A man who has been married a number of years, however much he loves his wife, will admit that he does not feel all the time as he feels at certain times, but his relation to his wife is not denied by this fact. Some of us who joined the army found that the emotion of patriotic feeling burned very low at some times though it burned brightly at others. On some mornings God will reward us by making us feel his presence and the glorious quietening, enheartening, invigorating sense of his nearness. But other mornings, for various reasons, we shall not feel any devotional emotion at all; but surely we must obediently give God our will and mind when we cannot offer him our feelings, and be prepared to keep our appointment with him when he does not reward our obedience with feelings. We are to follow him and leave our feelings to take care of themselves. I find that the lives of the poets help me in this matter. There were times for them all when the winds of inspiration were blowing and they lived in a glorious world of poetic feeling. But do we really suppose that Shelley could go to his desk at eight o'clock every morning and feel poetic? No! No more than I

can go to my prayers and feel devotional. But the poets would put in hard work writing something, perhaps, that was not greatly inspired, hammering out lines, searching for words. Tennyson spent hours and hours in sheer conative workmanship, and I do suggest that in those hours when the will and mind were at work far more than the emotions, these men were becoming poets in a more true sense than when the world of feeling was intensely real.

I therefore want to suggest that we should start a quarter of an hour earlier for work and drop into some church on our way. Some churches are usually open for prayer and meditation, or we might find a Catholic church, where the atmosphere is far more helpful than that of a bedroom. Let us try to keep that up every morning for six months. On many and many a morning we shall feel like missing it, but let us keep the appointment. After we have kept it we may feel like saying: "It does not make any difference. I feel no better. I am going to give it up;" but we shall be in process of becoming men of God, for God will come to us. We have his word on that, and I believe he comes to us at such a depth of personality that we are often unconscious, at the moment, that he *has* been. But at that depth of personality he can change our reactions to life. We are only really changed when the unconscious is changed, and the test of the value of our prayers is not what we happen to feel at this moment or at that. The test is our reaction to life. Are we

easier to live with? Are we kinder and more loving? Are we more tolerant of others? Do we really love the brethren? Are we finding a sense of serenity which does not leave us on the most hectic days? Do we feel that the joy that is at the heart of the universe is becoming our possession, even on days when we feel seedy and down-hearted? Is our will becoming stronger to endure? These are the questions we must ask ourselves as well as whether we feel different at the actual moment of prayer.

Let me turn to the second problem, that of the wandering mind. We remember how A. A. Milne has expressed it in classic language:

God bless Mummy, I know that's right.
Wasn't it fun in the bath to-night?
The cold's so cold, the hot's so hot,
Oh! God bless Daddy, I quite forgot.

If I open my fingers a little bit more
I can see Nanny's dressing-gown on the door.
It's a beautiful blue, but it hasn't a hood,
Oh, God bless Nanny and make her good.

We see how little Christopher Robin's mind, after the first petition, has gone back to the thoughts of his bath. And our mind is so fugitive that before we have uttered one petition we are thinking, "What shall I wear at the garden party?" We pull our mind back and say to it, "Now stop that, you are praying," only to think, "I must not forget to send that letter to So-and-So." With another violent jerk we haul it back by the scruff of

its neck and say, "Now pray, can't you?" and then it is off again on some other foolish adventure, so that often people spend their whole prayer time chasing their mind and fetching it back again, and then give up the exhausting process and crawl into bed.

I can only set down here some methods which I myself have found of use.

1. One morning, in our quiet time, we might take up our hymn book and turn to some of the great hymns of Charles Wesley. Indeed, we might work slowly through all the hymns by Charles Wesley in our particular hymn book and make them our morning prayer. If we read them aloud slowly, or else in a church in a whisper, we shall find how often we have sung the familiar words, and how rarely we have realized what we sang. And we shall be able to keep our mind on the words we are reading, and we shall find the genius of Charles Wesley in expressing some of our innermost aspirations. There are certain poems we could read in the same way, reading a verse and putting the book down and meditating upon it. The poems, for instance, in *The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse*,¹ *A Poet's Life of Christ*,² *Everyman's Book of Sacred Verse*,³ *An Anthology of Jesus*,⁴ and *The Jesus of the Poets*,⁵ are especially suitable for this purpose.

¹ Oxford University Press.

² By Norman Ault (Oxford University Press).

³ By Gordon Crosse (A. R. Mowbray).

⁴ By Sir James Marchant (Cassell).

⁵ By Leonard Gribble (Student Christian Movement Press).

2. Another method I have found of great value is to use the rich collections that are available in the prayers of others. I owe more than I shall ever be able to express to Doctor Orchard's *The Temple*.⁶

3. One of the best methods I know of keeping the mind from wandering is to write out one's own prayers. In this way one gradually forms one's own prayer book, and then the inspiration of mornings when the winds are blowing and prayer comes easy can be carried over to mornings when prayer seems hard and profitless and "all the wheels of being slow."

4. Another method of great value on a particularly busy day is, in the quiet time, to go through the day with Christ, as it were, taking each of the appointments one has in front of one and offering them to him, asking that when one comes to that particular hour he will reveal himself as present in the situation and show us his will.

5. Another method is that when we pass a certain street corner or walk along a certain street we should think of Christ as present. It is not practicable to think of him as present during every moment of a busy day. Doctor Temple tells us we should not do this. We are taking concentrated intellectual energy from the task in hand and not giving our best. But I knew a man who took this point seriously and who told me, twelve months afterward, that it had become so precious to him that now he did not care to go along this

⁶ Published by Dent.

particular street with another, lest the other person should talk. That particular street had become sacred ground.

6. Ruskin somewhere points out the value of "trying to be present, as if in the body, at each recorded event in the life of the Redeemer." If a person has a vivid imagination, wonderful results sometimes come from taking some specific incident in the Gospels and imagining oneself present.

7. I wish to add a method which may apply especially to tired mothers or to women with household tasks. I feel I cannot conscientiously ask some women to get up any earlier in the morning, or demand that they should spend a long time in quiet when they have breakfast to prepare, a husband to push off to business, and children to get ready for school. I would like to suggest for them, however, that after the midday meal—or to quote what one of my friends does—after she has made the beds—there should be a certain time of relaxation. I suggest that after the midday meal, when children and husband have gone, she should pull a couch up in front of the fire, or by the window in the summer, wrap herself up in a rug, try to relax the mind and body, and think of some quality in the nature of God which is her particular need at that moment. Think of it as being at her disposal. Think of herself as receiving it at that moment. For example, in the life of a busy mother, peace of mind is one of the greatest needs. Nothing is more beautiful in a busy home than

to see a mother who, with everything to make her hectic, fussy, irritable, and bothered, dwells in what A Kempis called "a multitude of peace." Supposing she finds it hard to maintain this inner peace and serenity with all there is to do. I am sure she would find help by a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or, if she can spare the time, an hour, when, with relaxed body and mind, she says to herself: "The peace of God is mine. At this moment the peace of God is flooding my heart and mind." Further, "God gave us memory," someone says, "that we might have roses in December." God gave us memory that we might recall moments of peace to help us in moments of rush. Let such a mother recall the memory of some evening in the summer holidays when she sat on the sands and watched the sun setting over a waveless ocean, or some other memory of quiet and hush. And then let her, having filled her mind with such thoughts, drop off to sleep. The mind can soon be trained to waken us at a given time. I can sit down in a chair at almost any time of the day and go to sleep telling myself, before I drop off, that I will wake, say, at ten minutes to two, and with a very little practice the unconscious—which always registers the passage of time—will do what is required of it. This after-dinner relaxation is one of the most wonderful treatments that can be prescribed for what we call nervy people. Remember the gracious promise, "He giveth to him beloved *in sleep*."

Our prayers ought to contain a few moments of

listening. Let us by all means have paper and pencil handy to register any thought that comes to us in a couple of moments of absolute silence. We shall need to check the thought that comes, and we shall discuss this more under the heading "Guidance." But quite often God cannot speak to us because our quiet time is so far from being quiet that it is all a going out of ourselves to him with no opportunity for him to come through to us.

Our prayer also should have a place for others. This is partly covered by the suggestions made above, for many hymns and prayers and poems of others are prayers for others, and our own book of prayers will contain such prayers. But I fear it is little use saying, "God bless John Smith." I think we must use our imagination and picture ourselves going into John Smith's bedroom where he lies ill, or into those circumstances where John Smith happens to be, with Christ, asking ourselves, and him, what he wants to do in John Smith's life or circumstances and imagine the thing as happening. Not asking that it shall happen, for then our emphasis is on the future, but believing that, at the moment, it is actually happening. We must remember that when we pray for another we are not stirring a reluctant God to action. God is much more eager to bless John Smith than we are to have him blessed. What we are doing is to release into John Smith's life energies which are already at work. Or perhaps more accurately, altering the psychic conditions

which surround John Smith so that the energies of God can be more effective.

I want to spend a moment trying to make that more clear. Sometimes we, at the point A, think of God at the point B, dimly conceived to be somewhere up in the heavens, whence he will bless John Smith at the point C. But God is already at the point A in us and at the point C in John Smith, and our prayer is not a ball that we throw up to God and ask him to throw it down with greater force at John Smith as the creation of a different psychic atmosphere at both the point A and the point C, the point B being already coincident with A and C. Perhaps another illustration will be clearer. We used to make an experiment in the physics laboratory of putting an electric bell on an air pump disc and covering the disc with a bell jar. The electric bell is set ringing and the air is sucked out of the jar. We then find that the sound of the bell dies away. We can still see the hammer hitting the gong, but if the vacuum is complete, no sound reaches us. When we begin to let the air into the jar again, the sound comes back. No sound is heard when there is a vacuum. What our prayer does for John Smith, if I may press the illustration, is to let the air into the situation, or, if you like, to alter the psychic atmosphere so that John Smith may hear the voice of God in renewed comfort, or strength, or peace, or healing, or whatever John Smith needs. We do not alter the forces of God which are operative all the time. By our prayer we make

a psychic condition in which they can more powerfully operate; and it is the mystery of prayer that God will make the fulfillment of his own desires dependent on man's co-operation. It seems, in many cases, as though man must provide the conditions or God is hindered in his work. And while we must not be too greatly disappointed when prayer is not answered, since we have not yet learned those conditions under which we can best help God to achieve his will, we must not set limits to the value of prayer and faith, whatever our allegiance to the tenets of "science" may be.

I want to tell one true story which very deeply impressed me. A young woman in my church, whom we all love very truly and admire very greatly, was recently desperately ill. On a certain Sunday at noon a distinguished specialist stood in the dining-room of her home and said to her parents that her life hung in the balance. That Sunday night we prayed for her without mentioning her name. We did this at the request of her father, who did not want her name mentioned. He is an exceedingly modest and retiring man and did not desire the inevitable publicity of his daughter's name being mentioned to a large congregation, and I quite understand his point of view. The next day there was no change in her condition. On the Monday evening, however, I happened to be meeting the local Girls' League and the subject on which we were to think together was prayer. I realized that every girl in the room knew the patient and loved her, and I

suggested that for ten minutes we should definitely pray for her, in imagination going into her room, with Christ, and believing that, through our prayer, forces would operate upon her, not only in regard to the patience and skill of nurses and doctors, but that psychological energies, of which we knew so little, would be powerfully released for her well-being and recovery. I went straight from that room to the patient's home. Her father told me, before I could relate what had happened, that the doctor had just gone after saying, "I cannot tell you quite why, but I believe she has taken a turn for the better." From that moment the patient never looked back. You may call this coincidence if you will, but before you do so let me add this other word. As soon as anybody was allowed to see the patient I had a short conversation with her. I had not told her a word of what had happened before she said to me that on that very Monday evening at the time when we were gathered together, though she did not know it, she said to herself: "I cannot struggle any longer. I am beaten." "Then," she said, "suddenly came a liberating thought, all my friends at Brunswick won't give me up. They are helping me and I must leave it to them." She said that although she was in great pain a most delicious sense of peace fell upon her, and she is now back in our midst.

I know that case after case can be cited in which prayer has been offered lovingly and intensely and with great faith, and yet the patient has died. It

must be the task of some of us to try to discover under what conditions faith and prayer are potent, because I, for one, am convinced that, under certain conditions, there is no limit to their potency. Whether it was the knowledge of the patient possessed by every person in the room, and the united love and faith, I do not know, but I do believe that that was an example of the power of prayer.

Our quiet time, then, must not become an orgy of selfish introspection. We can all carry on a ministry for others by our readiness to give ourselves in prayer for them.

Do not let us be put off by apparent failures or by the modern idolatry of science. There are things not contranatural but supernatural which belong to a sphere where the authority of science does not yet run. Jesus expected us to be at home in a world where proof is not offered, but where experiment is rewarded. I shall never forget Doctor Orchard saying to a small group of us that his time for prayer was so precious that when it ended he felt like a lover parting from his beloved who could hardly bear the moment of separation and who said, "Not yet, not yet." I have not got to that point myself, but I have sometimes been in sight of it. I would like to add one other incident about that great saint who has recently become a Catholic. On one occasion he was staying with a friend of mine who is the minister of a Methodist Church not noted for its architectural beauty. Doctor Orchard said to his host: "Let us go and say our prayers in your church." When

they got into the church Doctor Orchard, a great lover of beauty, said to my friend: "Is that where you have to preach and pray?" My friend said, "Yes." Doctor Orchard replied: "You deserve to be prayed for. Let us pray together." My friend said afterward that it was only by accident that he happened to notice the time they knelt down. He said that after an hour and ten minutes Doctor Orchard rose from his knees, with tears streaming down his face, and in a voice broken by emotion, said to my friend: "It is a dear name, A. It is a dear name." I have never, myself, been within sight of communion with Christ on that high level for so long an unbroken period and of such intense quality, but that kind of experience lies a little bit further along the road which it is our privilege to tread.

CHAPTER IV
FELLOWSHIP

"Fellowship is a living intercourse between personalities."

"The sustained will to live the life of fellowship, despite any coldness or crankiness that tends to chill or break spiritual unity, is the foundation of the church's life and is bound in the long run to achieve the end desired."

—BASIL MATHEWS and HARRY BISSEKER.

CHAPTER IV

FELLOWSHIP

CHRISTIAN fellowship began when Jesus called twelve men "that they might be with him."¹ He called them not only for their sakes but for his own sake. He could give them something invaluable, but every one of them could give him something. From that beginning all other Christian fellowships, down to the latest group, have developed. For the sake of humble, shy, and modest folk I want to emphasize that every *one* of them could give him something that he needed. For the incarnation reveals, among many other rich things, this: that God's humility is so complete that he has made the lowliest of us necessary to himself.

And this note of fellowship is one of the most important in the Christian life. For a person thrown up on a desert island no doubt compensations are possible, but the normal life of the Christian is a life of fellowship. A normal and full Christian life cannot be lived alone. Again and again we hear this note in the Gospels. The shepherd leaves the ninety and nine that he may seek for the one which is needed in order to complete the fellowship, and the Good Shepherd is

¹ Mark 3. 14.

distinguished from the hireling by his love for the fellowship. The climax to the story of the prodigal is his restoration to fellowship, and the sin of the elder brother is that he will not join the fellowship. A disciple is one who enters the fellowship; is no longer called servant but friend, and so long as man possesses a herd instinct, which is to say as long as man is man, he will never find his maximum strength in anything outside fellowship. Almost every important movement in the world is recognizing this fact, and we notice fellowship groups springing up everywhere. "The lack of fellowship," says William Morris, "is hell." The lack of fellowship in marriage means unhappiness and perhaps divorce. The lack of fellowship in the home accounts for one of the greatest social menaces of our time: homes which are not really unities and which are used by young people merely as dormitories. The lack of fellowship in business leads to strikes and lockouts, and the lack of fellowship between nations makes war. In every phase of life we find illustrations of that old saying, "The strength of the pack is the wolf, and the strength of the wolf is the pack."

Fellowship is essential in the life of the church. Without it the individual fails and the church, as a whole, is robbed of its power. There was one terrible night when the fellowship which Jesus called together broke down. They all forsook him and fled. And the miracle of Pentecost is understood best when we realize not merely the marvelous things that happened, but watch a

fellowship that was broken being restored and made new. They became one in a new sense, in a new way, and with a new power. And one sometimes allows one's mind to try to imagine what would happen if the fellowship, now broken by the disunion of the churches, actually became one once more. Such a union, one imagines, will not be by argument or by many conferences. We shall become one where the first Christian fellowship started—at the feet of Christ. When all the churches regard it as their first joyous duty to offer Christ to the world, and change people's lives, and leave them to make their own creeds out of their experiences, we shall find a new unity, a new fellowship, and a new power. I welcome the Oxford Group Movement on this ground also, that I believe it can make the greatest contribution to the reunion of the churches in our generation. One saw signs of this at the recent Oxford House Party, where between four and five thousand people, of almost every denomination in Christendom, were gathered together at the feet of Christ, seeking the new life that he offers and concerned to pass it on, and unconcerned, at any rate for the moment, with theology, the consideration of orders, and the differences in their creeds. It is said that Nelson came on board his battleship on one occasion and found two officers quarreling, and he rebuked them with the sentence: "Gentlemen, there is only one enemy—France." If all the Christian people in the world could forget their quarrels and present an unbroken front against

the one enemy sin, the impact of that force would be irresistible. No social evil could stand it. The fingers of a hand are often separated, and their separateness, at certain times, undoubtedly has a value, but when summoned to face an enemy they close up into one fist and their separateness disappears. The church lacks that degree of "punch" which it might possess.

The name of John Wesley is sometimes invoked in favor of narrow views. Let me quote some words of his: "Give me thy hand. I do not mean you to be of my opinion; you need not. I do not expect it or desire it; neither do I mean I will be of your opinion. I cannot; it does not depend on my choice. I can no more think than I can say or hear as I will. Keep your opinion and I mine, as steadily as ever. Only give me thy hand. I do not mean embrace my modes of worship or I embrace yours. I have no desire to dispute with you one moment. Let all matters—of belief—stand aside, let them never come inside. If thine heart is as my heart; if thou love God and all mankind, I ask no more. Give me thy hand." "I believe," someone has said, "in the beloved community and in the spirit which makes it beloved and in the communion of all who, in will and deed, are its members. I see no such ideal community as yet, but my rule in life is: 'Act so as to hasten its coming.'"

Let me pass on to some practical suggestions about our fellowship within the church, and I hope to be forgiven for quoting from my own

experience in my own church. Every Friday evening those of us who gather together for fellowship, after a few minutes' worship together, divide up into ten or fifteen groups of not more than twelve or fifteen people. Each group contains a leader and a scribe. The leader is not expected to make a speech or to do other than gently keep the people in his group more or less to the point, and by suitable remarks to draw out the discussion at some points and to suppress it at others. We find that it is not wise to make an outstanding person in the group a leader. He will speak any way. For instance, if a minister is in the group, he should not be allowed to lead it, except in exceptional circumstances, because he will talk too much. A shy person, who is very young, often makes an ideal leader. The scribe is not there to report what everybody says; he makes notes on valuable findings of the group or on any question in which the group wants further help. After fifty minutes' discussion the groups return to the central room and the scribes read out their findings. Then the meeting is open for general discussion and, finally, the person in charge that particular evening, who might well be the minister or deaconess or a lay preacher, tries to sum up and lift the whole issue as high as he can, remembering that the aim is not to settle or solve some intellectual problem, but to help those who have gathered in the difficult business of living.

Almost everything depends on the question that

is before the groups. It is better if this question can be in the minds of those who gather some days before the fellowship meeting. We print it on the order of service for the previous Sunday. It is very significant to notice how useful an evening will be spent with a question which has a practical bearing on life, and how poor an evening will be spent if the question is an academic theological one. The question of questions which I should like to have behind the minds of all those who meet in such fellowships is: "How can I find, or deepen, the experience of Christ which the New Testament offers, and how can I pass it on to others?"

I have found several things, by a fairly long experience of such groups, which I should like to pass on. For some subjects it may be better to divide the company into men and women, and again into young men, middle-aged men, and older men (up to twenty-five, twenty-five to forty, and forty to sixty) and the same with the women. But in the main I favor mixed groups. Further, I think the best fellowship is found in groups which are as mixed as they can be in regard to the education, calling, and outlook of the members. One of the best groups in which I have shared contained a director of several companies, a postman, a university student, a servant girl, a girl doing home duties, a doctor, and a male school-teacher. The way we could help one another to see other points of view was fellowship at its best.

Another point I hasten to make is that in true

Christian fellowship it must be clear that everybody's contribution is equally welcome. We are all ready to pay respect to the opinion of the expert, but since we are talking mainly about life we must not allow anybody to be awed into silence by the profound views of some pundit. Nor must we sit in sacred silence while some merchant prince holds forth on unemployment. Further, we must never allow ourselves to be dominated by somebody with a very dogmatic manner and a very imperious temper. Here a sense of humor in the leader is invaluable. I have heard a person, very great in his own estimation, tell his views with a finality which the Pope himself could not exceed, and then heard a girl leader of about seventeen add in a tiny voice, "And that's that!" ending a momentary awed hush with a burst of delighted laughter from us all.

Another point about Christian fellowship must be an appeal for the open mind. It is astonishing to find the number of people who will come into a group with certain preconceived opinions. If the group agrees with these opinions, it is in their estimation a good group. If the group disagrees with them, they develop a sense of injury and resentment. We must be open-minded enough to realize that a thing may be true even if we have not heard it before, and, indeed, may be true if we definitely disagree with it. We must seek for the truth and not for the confirmation of our preconceived ideas.

I think it is very important also that members

of groups should not repeat outside what is said in the fellowship of a group. Not that the group is a kind of secret society; but it is so easy to misquote or to quote out of the context, and so hard not to misrepresent what people say, that it is a good working rule that what is said in the groups is not for public consumption. If people find that they are being quoted outside, they will often be effectively silenced.

Another point perhaps worth stressing is that a group is not necessarily failing when silence falls upon it. There are some good souls who think that a silence must be filled up somehow, so they proceed to say something that is not worth saying. Some of the finest groups I have attended have been those in which the hush of God has fallen upon us and we have wanted to listen to him for a few moments rather than to a human voice. Do not let us be embarrassed by silence. René Bazin has spoken of those "whose silences are full of conversations with God."

Some eager young souls expect a little too much from group fellowship. They expect that all their problems will be solved and are disappointed if this is not so. There are hundreds of reasons why this cannot be so in many cases. God's impartation must be limited by our knowledge and faith, and so on. But we are likely to get farther together than alone. And it is better that a group should break up without a definite answer to some problem of conduct or life, than that the personality of some dominating leader should push them

to a conclusion which causes their minds to stop thinking. It is better to go away to review a situation again and come to one's own conclusion than to go away supposing that because Mr. So-and-So has said this, a subject is settled. A conclusion to which we come by ourselves is a far greater treasure and, ultimately, of a far greater authority, than one which is pushed on to a mind which has not quite got to the point of receiving it.

If Christian fellowship were all it might be, however, the individual members of our churches ought to be able to find in it tremendous help with their problems. A man who is up against some moral problem in his business life ought to be able to feel that he can put that problem before the fellowship in his church, knowing that they will pray about it, seek the guidance of God in it, view it from without, as he, from within the situation, cannot view it; and I think he ought to feel that a unanimous finding of such a group is the mind of God concerning that situation. I believe that is implied in the New Testament.²

The fellowship group from my church has, on several occasions, gone to other churches and been successful in starting groups there. It is frankly astonishing how a live group in a church can revitalize the life of the whole church. I have known churches in which two or three live people have got together and met week after week. They have not made a great appeal that others should join them. This, in my opinion, is bad psychol-

²Matthew 18. 15-20.

ogy. When we say, "Please do come and join us," people respond as a favor to us. Christian fellowship should be of such a quality that people will come to us and say, "May I join?" and when they do it in that spirit, they value the fellowship very much more than if they are joining in response to an appeal. The church has suffered very much, I believe, by making her threshold low. She should make her threshold high so that people realize what a privilege it is to belong to the Christian Church. Even if a fellowship remains quite small for months, it is better that this should be its spirit. One thinks of Christ's parable of the leaven where cell after cell is added until, quite gradually and slowly, the whole lump is leavened.

I cannot, myself, avoid the conclusion that group fellowship will more and more come to be the central thing of church life. I see already the end of the Sunday of two stereotyped services. In olden days the "parson" got that nickname because he was the only *persona* in the neighborhood, the only educated person, and, therefore, the only channel by which the people could get certain ideas. But in these days of books and libraries and wireless, when the average education of the pew is almost as high as the average education of the pulpit, it does seem a lot to expect young people to come and listen to a discourse without any chance of asking questions or discussing the points raised. I find, continually, that in places where services are not very well attended, any opportunities given to young people to discuss the problems

of living are well attended, even at difficult times. I have known companies of young people, over two hundred strong, meet on a hot Saturday afternoon in June, on the premises of a very poorly attended city church, to discuss prayer. And the future, along these lines, is full of hope. When one remembers that every method of offering healing to men has undergone revolutionary changes within the last twenty years, it is incredible that the best way in which we can meet the sicknesses of the soul is to offer two services on Sunday which follow the same order one hundred and four times a year. Most ministers would admit the difficulty of making two good sermons a week. It seems to me indicated that it would be well to give up the painfully dull services in many a church and chapel, attended by a dispirited handful of people, led by an equally discouraged minister, and put in its place a live group, if only of half a dozen, who are questing for reality. Such a substitution could no more be called failure than a doctor fails by substituting a modern scientific method of healing the body for some cumbersome technique of an older day.

Let us make a beginning in our own churches. Each one of us has a little bit of mosaic to bring, some little bit of truth, some little bit of experience, some little discovery in things moral and spiritual, some little bit of tenderness or sympathy, some helpful, or even stern word that will help another wayfarer. Let us each bring our little bit of mosaic, however humble it seems, and

lay it in the right way. Then gradually a pathway will be made along which Christ shall come in power to our hearts and to the church; a pathway such as shall enable us to sing with a new meaning:

“Lord, come away!
Why dost thou stay?
Thy road is ready; and thy paths, made straight,
With longing expectation wait
The consecration of thy beauteous feet.”

CHAPTER V
GUIDANCE

TO A WATERFOWL

Whither, 'midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far through their rosy depths dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Of where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean-side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form, yet on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright.

—WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

CHAPTER V

GUIDANCE

THE question of God's guidance in our individual lives is one of great perplexity to a large number of thoughtful men and women. The problem, for most, reduces itself to three questions:

1. How can he, the Creator of this vast universe, stoop to take an interest in so small a thing as the detail of my life?

2. What are the conditions of guidance? That is to say, under what conditions, on my side, can I really bank on being guided by God?

3. Granted, for the moment, that God does guide, how does he do it, and what are the ways in which his guidance is made clear to me?

I propose to confine myself to these three questions.

1. The modern man, even though he has had no scientific training, has been given, through popular books and through wireless talks, a new conception of the vastness of the universe of which we are part. If I open Sir James Jeans's book, *The Mysterious Universe*, before I begin to read I am confronted by a frontispiece which is alleged to be a photograph taken through the largest telescope in the world. It looks like a black square

with a lot of little white dots on it. I am told that the white dots are not stars only, but nebulæ, or star-stuff. I am told that they are so far away that although the light from them is traveling toward my eye at the rate of one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles a second, that light takes fifty million years to reach me. In the perspective offered by the new physics the whole universe we know is almost negligible amid the universes which exist, and this planet of ours that we call the earth is almost of negligible importance. "If God," says one despairing astronomer, "should send one of his angels to look for this planet amid all the glittering hosts of his stars, it would be like sending a child out on to some vast desert to look for one particular grain of sand." When we look up into the heavens on some starry night, it does seem as though the sky were full of stars and planets; but Sir James Jeans says that if Waterloo Station were cleared of everything except six specks of dust—an interesting suggestion to all who know Waterloo Station—the station would be more full of dust than space is full of stars. So we might go on multiplying statements of physicists and astronomers until our life on earth seemed to be just the buzzing of a few insects and of no serious account whatever.

Stately purpose, valor in battle, splendid annals
of army and fleet.

Death for the right cause, death for the wrong
cause, shouts of triumph, sighs of defeat,

Raving politics never at rest while his poor earth's
pale history runs.

What is it all but the murmur of gnats in the
gleam of a million million suns?

If we let this idea of vastness fill our minds, it does seem hard to think that the Creator of such a vast universe, or number of universes, is interested in whether it is wet on washing day, or whether we marry Joan or Ethel, or whether we take this job in Birmingham or one in Carlisle, or whether I become a doctor or a minister. One recalls the sneer of Mark Twain, that the whole of earth's history is simply a brief and rather discreditable incident on one of the minor planets.

But we must get our perspective corrected. Surely, the true argument is that of the psalmist who put two sentences together not by accident, but by deep intention. "He healeth the broken in heart. . . . He telleth the number of the stars."¹ It is true that the psalmist did not know the vast universe that we know, but the argument still holds and I believe it could be stated truly in this way. The power which is manifested in the vast universe is power at our disposal. A materialist says: "Don't be so silly and don't be so presumptuous. How can you count for anything amid these glittering worlds?" I think the answer is to take his very argument. The God who made these glittering worlds is my Father, and his manifestations of power should comfort me if I glimpse how great are the resources that are at the disposal

¹ Psalm 147. 3, 4.

of one who is a child. I have stayed with very wealthy people who lived in a great house in its own grounds, and who had one baby son. How absurd it would be to say to them: "Why do you bother about this little child? He is only eighteen inches long. In size he is nothing compared with your vast house and grounds and the acres of farm land beyond!" I can imagine the father replying: "You have seen my large estates, my house, my treasures. In a sense they are symbols of my wealth and power. But all I have and am, of which the things you see are only symbols and expressions, are at the disposal of one who is worth more than them all, for he, my son, is part of myself." God cannot be a Father to the planets and a mother to the stars, and the logic of size is irrelevant. Spiritual values are supreme, and we have the authority of the One who knew God best that God takes an interest in the very hairs of our head. We might, indeed, express the argument like this. Surely, He who has fashioned blind matter with such loving and wonderful care, and who takes the trouble to guide the planets in space, so that without noise and collision they swing out on their immense orbits, will not forget lives which are of infinitely greater value, in any intelligent scale of values, than the blind matter of which planets are made. And He who values a sparrow's fall will not fail those who are of more value than many sparrows.

There is another argument which will not stay to work out, but it might help to dispel any re-

maining illusion that God is only concerned with the infinitely vast. Science shows equally clearly that he comes down to the infinitely minute. If you are going to talk about the vastness of the universe, you must listen while science tells you, equally eloquently, about what takes place inside a drop of dew. Sir Oliver Lodge says that if you take one drop of dew and magnify it to the size of a planet, even then the molecules will not be any bigger than footballs. In these football-molecules are atoms no bigger than oranges. Within these orange-atoms are electrons all moving round their central nucleus and following the same laws which the planets follow in our sky. So, one may imagine that these orange-atoms are packed tight with electrons. "No," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "an electron has as much room to move inside its containing atom as a bee has room to fly in Saint Paul's Cathedral."

But our argument is soundest when we are not thinking of size but of value. The man who is crushed by a glacier, is, in a true sense, greater than the glacier which crushes him, because he knows that he is crushed. We can all think of many instances in which midget man controls forces which are infinitely vaster, according to some ways of measuring, than himself. But man knows, and knows that he knows, and man has the faculty to look up to God to worship and adore and to commune, and is at present the highest and most precious thing in all the sum of created things.

Let us pass on to the second question. Granted that He who guides the sparrows is willing to guide my life, what are the conditions of guidance?

2. (a) Do you not think the first condition of guidance is that we should try to produce consciously, in ourselves, and by our own volition, those conditions which take place in the life of a bird, automatically? The bird is guided as the poem I have printed at the beginning of the chapter beautifully describes. The bird has no will to throw up against the divine purpose. Therefore the bird's will is in harmony with the divine will, and the bird's life will fulfill the divine end, unless some being with a free will interferes in the arrangement. We think of a person who might shoot a bird, and, under such conditions, we can only take comfort in the thought that God will do something adequate to the bird's need. My argument is that if we do voluntarily what the bird has to do because of the mechanism of its make-up, we can bank on guidance as much as the bird can. Our argument is expressed in the words: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Instead of doing this, we so often go to God praying for guidance and saying: "This is what I am going to do. I hope you will approve." We ought to say: "What will thou have me to do?" We must take that self, that egoism, out of the situation if we are going to bank on guidance. When we will take our little problem to God, try-

ing to see the whole situation as he sees it, and taking sheer selfishness out of it, and saying to him, "I only want to do your will," I believe that when we get to the crossroads, we shall know which way to go.

I acknowledge straight away that we may make a mistake. Our best defense against such a mistake is our own sincerity. We cannot be absolutely certain of not making a mistake, because God has such a respect for personality that he will not disable our mental processes or tear our mental fabric; and he may have difficulty with our prejudices, our blindness, our wrong thoughts, our ignorance. If I may put it another way, we are sitting inside the house that we call personality, and because of all the experiences that have gone before, the windows of that house may be smoky, or dirty, or have the kind of crinkly glass we have in our bathrooms. If so, the light that comes from God's heaven has to be mediated through the kind of windows in the house. God himself cannot—without disturbing the whole bases of our personality—make white light come through, shall I say, blue windows and remain white light. And many splendid men have done things which they honestly thought were in harmony with the will of God, and later found that the light they had from heaven was colored or distorted by the windows of their own personality; and we may remember that we cannot walk outside the house of life. I am not disposed to say that a man who is conscientiously willing to be guided will always

be guided according to the ideal intention of God. I will say, however, that he will not make an irrevocable mistake; that if he does make a mistake, God, in a way to be described when we talk about his will, will weave the mistake into his ultimate purpose.

It is dangerous to say what God can do and cannot do, but as I read human life it does not seem to be his way to guide us apart from our previous thinking and our previous spiritual experience. He does not overwhelm personality. He does gradually change it. He can show us, to keep the figure, how to wash the windows, even how to put in new glass, but this may take so long that, in the meantime, we may do things which we should not be guided to do if the windows had always been maintained in their original purity. We say, for example, that we are guided by our conscience, and this is certainly one of the ways in which God guides us; but I could fill pages with illustrations of men and women entirely conscientious, but whose conception of God's will led them to what would now be considered criminal behavior. To take only one instance, the author of the hymn, "Glorious things of thee are spoken," was a slave-trader before he was a clergyman. With regard to one of his voyages, with hapless Negroes battened below decks, stolen from their homes for sale in American hells, John Newton wrote: "I never held sweeter communion with God than I did on this voyage."

(b) The second condition of guidance must

surely be our faith in the ultimate omnipotence of God. I am careful to say *ultimate* omnipotence, because I believe that this is the only sense in which God can be said to be omnipotent. Having allowed man free will, he makes inevitable his own *temporary* defeat at certain points. Here is Bryant's water fowl flying through the heavens toward its home in the far-off reeds. But supposing a so-called sportsman lifts his gun and shoots it, what of God's purpose then? Bryant says:

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright.

But what happens to God's guidance when that beautiful thing comes down, a mass of blood and ruffled feathers on to the moors? Frankly, I do not know. I cannot know. I can only suppose that God does something adequate to the need of the bird. And if that sounds a speculation, I can only tell you that it is based on the authority of One who knew more about the nature of God than any man before or since, and that just as I take the word of Einstein on any obscure problem of relativity because he is an expert speaking on his own subject, I take the authority of Jesus Christ on obscure problems concerning the nature of God. To state the case as mildly as possible, I am at least listening to the expert on his own subject, and when my own mind gets to a blank

end, I take refuge in his. Not a sparrow falleth "to the ground without your Father."

But human life is much more poignant. We all know people who put themselves into God's hands and committed their lives to him, praying daily for guidance, and yet those lives were cut short by disease or accident. I can only suppose that God is temporarily defeated, for I do not believe that it is his purpose that men should die in agony, or disease, or be killed through a surgeon's mistake or a nurse's carelessness, or a falling away of a cliff edge, or the crime of a drunken taxi driver. But the defeat is only temporary. Ultimately God's purpose will be achieved. A temporary setback is generally due to human folly, human ignorance, or human sin. One of the conditions of guidance is faith in omnipotence, and faith in omnipotence is a belief that the ultimate purposes of God will be accomplished.

(c) The third condition of guidance is, surely, obedience to the light we have. Some people are terribly worried by the kind of doubt that says: "I have no further belief in guidance. Ten years ago I did such and such a thing believing that I was guided, and now I can see that if I had only done something else, everything would have worked out better." This may certainly seem so, and yet it is only a speculation that it is so. If I had done other than I did, subsequent circumstances might have arisen to confuse me yet further. The issue might not have been as

straightforward as I think it would have been. It certainly looked as if the apostles were not guided when they chose Matthias. It looks as if that place should have been filled by Saint Paul. We never hear of Matthias afterward, and the heathen method which the apostles used in casting lots was, perhaps, not the best method of obtaining guidance. We are tempted to think that if they had waited and prayed, God would have shown them that his choice was the man of Tarsus. And yet, how can we be sure? Matthias may have fulfilled some part in the plan of which we know nothing, and I feel that we only worry ourselves into panic by the kind of doubt that destroys a belief in guidance because of the possibility of mistake. We must be obedient to the light we have at the time, and not keep looking back and asking a question which it is always difficult to answer, which could be stated thus: If something that has not happened had happened, would not what happened next have been better than what did happen? To save sending for the ambulance I will pass on to the next point!

(d) An important condition of guidance is, surely, that we ought not definitely to make up our mind about a situation until we have got to make it up. In the words of an old saying: "Don't try to cross the river until you get to it. When you get to it, you will probably find there is a bridge or a ford." We remember a good many sermons that have been preached on the text: The women "were saying among themselves, Who shall

roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb? and looking up, they see that the stone is rolled back.”² I remember reading how Doctor Temple, the Archbishop of York, was troubled by a decision which had to be made by a certain time. He gave himself to prayer, and when the time came to post his letter, the matter was clear. I remember reading, also, how Doctor Jowett consulted Doctor Berry about a most important decision. Doctor Berry asked, “When have you got to decide?” Doctor Jowett replied, “I have got to decide by Friday.” “Then,” said Doctor Berry, triumphantly, “when Friday comes you will know what to do,” and, sure enough, it was so.

(e) The most important condition I have left to the last; it is that of living close to God. When we have grown indifferent or careless or prayerless, we find that we have become dull and insensitive to the various voices of God. If we are living in close communion with him and are in tune with the Infinite, I think we shall be in no doubt about his guidance. So, it seems to me, Jesus knew at every turn what God wanted him to do next. He was in such close communion with God that he seems hardly to have hesitated until he came to that dread conflict in Gethsemane. But as we read the story of his crowded days in Galilee we get the impression of One who passed from one task to another quietly and without haste; One who is pulled at and besieged on every hand and yet always keeping that space of silence round his soul,

² Mark 16. 3-4.

that inner serenity, which is, perhaps, one of the most important things a busy life can possess. Jairus is pulling at his sleeve asking him to hurry up or his daughter will be dead.³ The message comes that the little girl has already passed away,⁴ and even then Jesus will not hurry away from the woman with the hemorrhage. God seems to be making it quite clear to him that first he must attend to this woman. He finishes his work with her and then, without haste or panic, passes on to the next problem. The resources of God will be at his disposal and all will be well. With perfect confidence he utters in his low, musical voice⁵ that lovely word which so reveals his love for children: "*Talitha cumi*"—"Get up, darling."⁶ And so we find a perfectly surrendered life, completely energized and completely guided in every detail of every day.

To the extent to which our communion with God is close and real I believe we may enter into the same secret. People sometimes say, "Well, I can believe that God guides in a general way;" but if we part with the idea of guidance as to details do we not part with the idea of guidance at all? Guidance in detail is no more difficult to an omnipotent God than a kind of vague general guidance, by which I suppose one means that God will muddle through somehow, much as the governments muddled through the Great War, and

³ Mark 5. 23.

⁴ Mark 5. 35.

⁵ Matthew 12. 18ff.; Revelation 1. 12ff.

⁶ Mark 5. 41.

that it does not much matter how many men fall as long as the general aim is realized. I believe that God guides in every detail of life, and that it is more than presumptuous of us to decide what is detail and what is not. Big doors swing on small hinges. Some things that we call detail decide the direction of a whole life. A detail will often decide a destiny. It may have seemed pure accident that you happened to meet a certain lady, but if she becomes your wife, it was not an unimportant detail. I quite agree that some details are settled without prolonged prayer. They are settled by common consent and we do not link the word "guidance" with them. At the same time it would seem, to me, presumptuous to rule out any point of conduct as beneath the notice of God.

3. Our last question was, What are the ways in which He guides? And here again I suggest four things.

(a) The first is common sense. We must not too readily dismiss this as a point not worth mentioning, since what a lot of people call common sense is not very common and, often, is not sense. But God has put mental machinery into our personality and he has put it there for a purpose. He has put it there so that he can use it if it is the appropriate machinery. I remember a man saying to me, "I prayed about my problem, but God never answered my prayer, so I used my common sense." He seemed unable to realize that God might be guiding him through his common

sense which had been given him for that purpose. He thought the decision was wholly his own. But who gave him his common sense? It is a very interesting point that people will always tend to think a thing is of God if it is uncanny and mysterious. If God had given him some exciting dream, or written the answer in letters of fire on his bedroom wall, he would have hailed the guidance as divine. Because it came through his common sense he deduced that it had nothing to do with God. But while we make this point we ought to remember that because a thing is common sense it is not therefore the guidance of God. God has guided the heroes and saints of all ages to do things which the common sense of the community has regarded as ridiculous and mad.

(b) The second way in which God guides is through the advice of experts. For instance, when the guidance we need is beyond our human powers, God will guide us, often, through those who have knowledge or ability which we do not possess. It is hard to see how God could guide us except through the advice of experts when we have not the requisite knowledge or ability to deal with the situation. For instance, we call in a specialist. That is not merely getting human help. God is working through the specialist. Supposing, for the moment, he is a medical or psychological specialist. He deals with our problem, he advises us to do certain things. He does not explain to us his technique. If he did, we should not understand him; and if God spoke to us in some voice

from heaven, in many cases we should not understand what he was talking about. If he told us to do certain things, in many cases what he told us to do would be beyond us. But through the specialist we have the guidance in realms of knowledge beyond our own. And this is true of the specialist in all sorts of spheres of life. The specialist is said to be a person who knows more and more about less and less; but if our problem lies in the little area in which he has specialized, to call him in is probably to obtain the greatest knowledge which could be brought to bear upon that situation; and we should do well to consider whether God does not guide in this way.

(c) A third way in which he guides is by the voice of the church. I have talked about this under the heading of "Fellowship" (pp. 63ff). When problems assail us in which we want guidance, especially problems of conduct, I feel sure that the guidance of God is often mediated through the voice of a Christian friend, and even more so in the advice of a group of Christian people who meet for prayer and fellowship. They can often see our problem as we cannot see it, because when we try to look at it we are looking at it through colored glasses. We literally cannot see it as we could if we were not part of it. A Christian fellowship should help us to test whether what we believe to be guidance is in harmony with the standards of absolute love, absolute honesty, absolute purity, and absolute unselfishness.

(d) The fourth method in which God guides

us is by what the Quakers call "the inner light." We must certainly include it as one of the methods God uses, the direct guidance of God to the soul, unmediated by any kind of advice and not necessarily in harmony with what we call common sense. Many who spend a quiet time with notebook and pencil, listening for what God shall say to them, find the most surprising and gratifying results, but this kind of guidance needs to be checked more carefully than any other kind. I think we should try to remember that it is not humanly possible completely to make the mind a blank, and I do not think it is God's way to drop ideas into our mind as one drops a pebble into a pond. If I may go back to an earlier illustration, the light from heaven always comes through the windows of personality and is affected by the state of the windows. Sometimes in a quiet time an idea suddenly comes to us and we may truly say it is of God, but we ought to remember that it is just as much the fruit of our previous mental processes as is the thought that comes to us, say, at the close of a keenly debated argument. We should make some very serious mistakes if any impulse that came to us in our quiet time was supposed, *for that reason alone*, to be from God. That guidance comes in a certain way is not a guarantee of its validity. Such an impulse as I have described may arise from the subconscious or the unconscious, and needs, therefore, careful questioning and checking before we decide that it is of God. We must overcome the tendency to

suppose that the more uncanny a message is, the more likely it is to have come from God. I should say the more uncanny a message is the more carefully it must be scrutinized.

We all have a definite call, for the need of the world is the call, and our vision of the need of the world is God's call to us. We need not wait for a voice that speaks in the watches of the night, or some vivid dream, or some uncanny message. What we must ask is how we are to respond to the call. It may be God wants us to go to central China; but it may be that he wants us to respond to his call in our office or factory or shop or school or college. The latter may seem less romantic, but it may be authentic guidance for all that, and *all* his work, in a sense, is missionary work. Where we serve will depend on many things, including our gifts, our training, our opportunity. But every Christian is committed to offer his life to God and to respond to those messages which God makes clear to his innermost heart.

CHAPTER VI
THE WILL OF GOD

“In His will is our peace.”—DANTE.

CHAPTER VI

THE WILL OF GOD

THE subject of the will of God is interrelated with the subject of guidance. Every true Christian realizes that he is challenged to do the will of God as far as that will is discernible. We have already noted that however good our intentions we cannot be infallibly sure that what we do is the divine will. The crusades were thought of as the divine will by some who took part in them. The crowds listening to the Pope and Peter the Hermit preaching the first crusade shouted: "It is the will of God! It is the will of God!" The pious Puritan, Colonel Hutchinson, decided, after long meditation and prayer, to vote for the execution of Charles I, believing himself to be divinely guided to that conclusion. Gladstone believed that he had a special sense of the divine will when he opposed the admission of Nonconformists to the universities. It causes some to doubt the value of any belief in guidance if we admit error. "Why ask for guidance," they will say, "if, after trying to know the will of God, I am told that I may be mistaken?" It is a real difficulty and we must try to think it out, but no claim to infallibility can be admitted. Human free will, ignorance, and prejudice mean liability to err. The only

comfort we have is that it is binding upon us to do the will of God even though we only know it in various degrees of imperfection, and that God can use even our mistakes if we have done the best we know. In practice we shall probably find that the stabbing point of the problem is not that of being unable to perceive what God wishes us to do, but the courage to follow the light that is given to us.

I want, in this address, to set forth four points about the will of God which have helped to clear my own thinking.

1. The first is that it is sometimes blasphemy to say "Thy will be done" when, by saying it, we do one or both of two things: (a) acquiesce in evil instead of becoming the instrument of God's will, or (b) accept a situation as the divine will in order to evade asking ourselves disturbing questions.

(a) We may contrast the attitude of those who, years ago, accepted slavery as the divine plan, with the attitude of Abraham Lincoln standing in the slave market and watching the traffic that, fortunately, has now become rare, and saying, beneath his breath: "If ever God gives me the chance, I will hit this thing, and I will hit it hard." Without taking time to dwell on the point, we can realize that it is sin to acquiesce in the modern social system. No true Christian can see the slums, the poverty, and the exploitation of the poor which goes on, and sit down with folded hands supposing it is all part of the plan of God.

We must oppose the spirit of those who can still sing:

“The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high or lowly
And ordered their estate.”

Such sentiments as these surely come very near to blasphemy. So the Christian must use his influence in opposing the spirit that makes for war, or intolerance, or oppression. He must realize that he is to be the cutting edge of the will of God.

I am reminded of the story of a little girl who, during her prayers at her mother's knee, said: “O God, don't let the birds be caught in John's traps. Don't let the poor little birds be caught! They won't! They can't! Amen.” Her mother said, “Betty, why were you so sure that God would answer your prayer and not let the birds be caught?” “Because,” said Betty, conclusively, “before I came up to bed I jumped on his traps and broke them.” An amusing story, but one with a moral which we might all take to heart.

(b) We sometimes accept, complacently, the idea of something being the will of God as a means of evading a challenge which might disturb us. For instance, how many girls are there who are “staying at home with mother,” accepting, complacently, that this must be the will of God, when they have unexplored talents which might be used in service to the world, and when their mothers have no real need of their services at home and

would be rather proud if their daughters showed a little initiative? And how many sons meekly accept, as inevitable, that they should go into their father's business? And how many fathers push their sons into their own business when it is exceedingly inappropriate that this should be done? If there were time I should like to emphasize this point. It is appalling—the word is not too strong—to consider the little thought that is given to the choice of a trade or profession, which is going to occupy some fifty years of a person's life. A father will say, "John can come into my office," or a boy will complacently accept the niche that is so easily made for him, without any consideration whatever as to whether this is the will of God. It is a form of lazy shrinking from asking questions the answer to which might be disturbing. So we find scores of people in middle life who are in the unhappy position of doing work every day which they hate and which does not express their personality, when they might have done brilliantly in another sphere if they had given a month's prayerful thought to a decision which affected half a century. I well remember a friend of mine who wanted to be a mining engineer. He read books about it, he had the type of mind fitted for such work, but his father had a store and the son was compelled to become a salesman, and a poor salesman at that. This kind of mistake is being made every day.

2. The second point that has cleared up some of my thinking about the will of God is that the

unpleasantness of a path does not prove that it is the path God wants us to follow. It is astonishing how many people think that unpleasantness is a sign of the divine intention. I talked with a person for a long time about the will of God in his life and at the end of the conversation he said, "Well, of course, that is what I should like to do, so I thought it could not be the will of God." Some of our hymns do definitely minister to this heresy:

Though dark my path and sad my lot,
Let me be still and murmur not,
Or breathe the prayer divinely taught,
Thy will be done.

If thou shouldst call me to resign
What most I prize, it ne'er was mine;
I only yield thee what was thine:
Thy will be done.

Should pining sickness waste away
My life in premature decay,
My Father, still I strive to say,
Thy will be done.

What a terrible God such a hymn supposes! I wish someone would write a hymn incorporating the idea that we should sing "Thy will be done" when we have played eighteen holes of golf on a glorious morning, or played four sets of tennis on a summer evening. We should sing "Thy will be done" as we get out of our cold bath, tingling all over with health and energy, or when we rejoice in the glories of a sunset, or when we watch

our children undo their stockings on Christmas morning, or sit down to dinner later on that same blessed day, or are thrilled by the glory of wonderful music or the love of a friend, or the worship of God's house.

Let us put away from us entirely any thought that a course of conduct is more likely to be the will of God because it is unpleasant than because it is pleasant. It may be the will of God even if it is unpleasant, but its unpleasantness is no sign of this. Indeed, other things being equal, the pleasantness of a path is an indication that it is God's will. We shall always do better the things we love doing, and if you would love to be a missionary and are prepared to train and discipline yourself, and have the opportunity, may it not be that your loving to be this is the way in which God is revealing his will to you? Who else put that love into your heart?

3. The third point that has helped my own thinking about God is that there is an interim and an ideal will of God. The phrase requires some explanation. We may use the phrase "the will of God" in the sense of God's ideal intention for his children, but we can use the phrase and, indeed, often do use it to mean his intention in circumstances which themselves are not his plan. For instance, I do not believe it is the intention of God that I should have influenza. I believe his perfect will for me, his ideal intention, is perfect health of body, mind, and soul. But I also believe that if I get influenza, then in those circumstances,

which he did not foreordain, I may still seek an inner will of God. To put it crudely: when something happens to us which he did not intend, there still remains a course of conduct which is his will in those circumstances. There is, in fact, an interim will of God that, having influenza, I should be patient and try to use the hours during which I am laid aside to his glory. It is not the ideal intention of God for any man to live in a slum. Living in a slum is forced upon him by circumstances which God did not intend, circumstances caused by carelessness and selfishness which God hates. But there is an interim will of God that a man forced to live in slums should make the best of it, and by the glory of his character triumph over the conditions of slumdom. It is not the will of God that a man should be unemployed, or sweated, or exploited; but some of the greatest saints in the world are those who, while clearly seeing this point, yet are determined to see in their conditions not the intention of God but the challenge of God, so that in those unideal circumstances, where his ideal will cannot be achieved, they do his interim will.

I find this thought a comfort in the many occasions when I touch suffering and pain. I do not believe that this suffering and pain is the will of God. Christ, who fought suffering and pain, would not have spent his life trying to defeat the will of God. He spent his life in doing it. If, therefore, I can do anything to make the sufferer better, that is the ideal will of God; but if I fail and if all

other means fail, I can try to help the sufferer to take such an attitude to his suffering that he turns it into spiritual gain, and that is the interim will of God in regard to suffering. In another place¹ I have tried to show that the cross itself was not the ideal intention of God, for we cannot equate the will of God and the will of evil men who plotted Christ's death. But when those circumstances were thrust upon Christ by evil men so that he was brought to the dilemma that either he must go to the cross or run away, it was the interim will of God that he should be crucified rather than be a coward, and he cries, "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt." And because he does not falter, in those circumstances God is able to bring him to as great, or, as many of us think, to even greater triumph than that which he would have achieved if evil had not tried to bar his way. So God can make even the wrath of man to praise him. We are too ready to sit down to calamity, saying: "It is the will of God," but when we begin to analyze most of the things which we call calamity, we find that they are due to human ignorance, or human folly, or human sin, not, possibly, in the person who suffers, but caused by some member of the great human family whose assets we share and, therefore, whose liabilities we must bear. Now, God is always trying to exchange ignorance for knowledge, folly for wisdom, and sin for holiness. Therefore, we can-

¹ *His Life and Ours*, pp. 250-51 (The Abingdon Press, New York).

not say that any of the calamities which come from these things are the intention of God, but in them all we may perceive his interim purpose and respond to the challenge which they all contain. The universe is so guarded that nothing is allowed to come through to us which has final power to defeat the spirit—nothing allowed to come through to us which, by the alchemy of our attitude to it and our co-operation with God, cannot be turned into gold. The cross is what it is to us all not because, from the beginning of the world, God planned a murder, but because when the ignorance, folly, and sin of man thrust the cross upon Jesus, Jesus saw what the interim will of God was. He responded perfectly to the challenge of the situation, and by the alchemy of his attitude to it and his co-operation with the Father, he changed a symbol of shame and tyranny, of evil and murder, into that shining thing which, through all the ages ever since, has been the holiest symbol of spiritual triumph the world has ever known.

Calamity will come to everybody in this room. When it comes, I do not think you will find a great deal of help by saying, "Well, I suppose it is the will of God and I must bear it." Say, rather, "It is part of the burden of God, and I have been asked to share it." You must not believe a thing true of God for which a man would be thrust into jail or put into a lunatic asylum. Think of it this way: Whatever your child did to you, you would not hand it out some terrible disease. If, indeed, you did so, you would be promptly clapped into

jail or sent to a criminal lunatic asylum. How, then, can we suppose that God, to punish a person, will, as it were, hand him out a cancer? "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Yet I have heard a good man, and even a thoughtful man, suggest that the illness and death of his child were a divine punishment meted out to him because he did not go to church.

I promised to say one word about God weaving our mistakes into his plan. I remember, in Persia, watching the making of a Persian rug. The rug is set up vertically and planks are stretched across on which sit those who are going to work it. They work from the reverse side of the pattern. I was made to understand that if a worker put in red where black should be, the artist would not necessarily interfere and take the thread out again. He would, rather, alter the pattern. Indeed, one of the tests by which we sometimes ascertain whether a Persian rug has been made in Persia or Wolverhampton, is to search for inequality in the pattern. I have a Persian rug in my hall now, the gift of an Arab Sheik, which suddenly, for no reason at all, develops in one place a yellow splash. I believe in Persia, when the workers have finished their work, the artist shows them the completed rug. May we have here some kind of illustration of how the Great Artist, who alone can see the whole pattern of human life being weaved into his plan, uses our mistakes? He does not, by some imagined

omnipotence, burst out of heaven to stay the hand intent on evil. He does not miraculously guide those who need guidance, irrespective of their knowledge and ignorance. Ignorance and folly and sin frequently thread black into his carpet, where his intention was red; but has he not some way of so weaving the black into his pattern that the beauty of the ultimate plan is unspoiled?

4. A fourth point it is sufficient just to mention. It is that the will of God is the only basis of our peace. The whole harmony of the universe is a harmony, just as the universe is a *universe*, because of the One in whom all things hold together. Anything that sets itself against the current of his will is a disharmony. It is doomed to ultimate defeat because it is attempting the impossible task of making a multiverse. Those whose wills are not offered to the divine will, seeking to be one with it, finally are found to be in a state of dis-ease. Health, as we have said, is to be in harmony with environment. The secret of inner peace is found in the well-known words of Dante, "In His will is our peace."

CHAPTER VII
RESTITUTION

"First be reconciled to thy brother. . . . Agree
with thine adversary quickly."—JESUS CHRIST.

"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath."

—SAINT PAUL.

CHAPTER VII

RESTITUTION

NOTHING is clearer in the Gospels than the direct teaching that our relation to God cannot be right unless our relations with men are as right as we can make them. This statement has all the authority of Jesus himself. If a man has quarreled with his brother and is the aggressor, it is no use his coming to say his prayers hoping to put himself right with God, no not even if he makes an offering to God. Indeed, if he be "the innocent party," he had better read the exact words of the Gospel: "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest *that thy brother hath aught against thee*, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."¹ Further, I think I am right in saying that Jesus does clearly teach that the forgiveness of God, in regard to our own sins, cannot be obtained if we, on our part, refuse forgiveness to those who have wronged us. "The prayer for forgiveness is the only petition in the Lord's Prayer to which any condition is attached." And repentance is not the condition mentioned. The condition mentioned

¹ Matthew 5. 23.

is that we should forgive others. The story of the unforgiving servant² drives this point home.

We are evidently to do all that we can to remove out of the way any stumbling-block which is in the way of establishing a loving relationship with our fellows. We are to learn that there is no such thing as a private reconciliation with God as long as wrong things with men are not put right. And a religion which neglects this tremendous truth is that most subtle and spurious thing, a perversion of religion, which is self-deception. It is this which some bitter critics accuse all religion of being; a comfortable way of escaping the challenge of reality. If we are going to run away from criticism instead of asking what it means and whether we cannot benefit by a frank recognition of its truth; if our self-love is so big that we take as a personal injury even an unintentional slight, it seems to me that our religion has become not a tonic but a drug, a kind of subtle anæsthetic which we administer to ourselves in order to deaden the pain of feeling fools. We do not realize that we are making out a strong case for a very subtle enemy of religion. We must remember that there is a strong opinion in many quarters to-day that religion is the dope of the people. It is said, for instance, that here is man living his life on this little planet with his pride hurt because existence ends in death, so he makes up a beautiful theory of life everlasting. Here is a man burdened with a sense of injustice and wrong, so he makes up a

² Matthew 18. 23-35.

beautiful theory that everything will be put right later. Here is a man feeling little and lonely in this vast universe, so he makes up a beautiful theory of a Fatherly God—a substitute for the father of his childhood—who pats him on the head and looks after him. Here is a man feeling hurt by the buffetings of his neighbors, so he runs to his God for comfort, security, and escape.

Sometime I should like to deal with that criticism, which can easily be rebutted, for real religion has sent more men to death and persecution than any other force in the world. But the critic is quite right here, that there is a spurious religion about, by which a man deceives himself that he can be right with God and wrong with his neighbors. Do let us face the fact that that is self-deception, and let us try the sincerity of our motives by this test, that a real experience of religion makes a man want first of all to put right his relation with his fellows; and if he has wronged them, a true religion makes him desire to make restitution.

For evidence of this turn to the case of Zacchæus. When Jesus called him from the tree and proceeded to invite himself to dinner, it was not Jesus who condemned Zacchæus for having wronged his fellows in the past; it was not Jesus who suggested that Zacchæus should make restitution. The facts are that as soon as Zacchæus entered into this new religious experience, which his contact with Jesus engendered, he himself said, "If I have wronged any man, I will restore him

fourfold." I want the first point clearly in our minds to be this: that an oath of allegiance to Christ and a new experience of him may be tested as to their sincerity by our asking ourselves whether this new experience does not drive us to make restitution. If we have robbed another of money, we are to restore it at once. That is easy to do. If we have robbed another of his good name, we are to confess it to the person we have robbed and try to make good the damage we have done. If we have harbored jealous thoughts or bitter, unkind criticisms of another, we are to tell that other and we are to try to put the damage right. In ninety out of every hundred cases of wrong done to another there is some kind of restitution which should be made, and the test of the sincerity of our religion is whether we are prepared to make it or not; and we ought to spend some time thinking back to the people we have wronged and spend more time carrying out acts of restitution.

There is a girl in my church who looked for God for years, and she and I must have talked a score of times. "It is no good," she would say, "I cannot find any sense of reality. It may be true for other people, but it is not true for me." Then she found two things. She had a sense of resentment over an unfortunate incident that happened some years ago and her relationship with her sister was all wrong. The first had only to be discovered and frankly met and it was done with forever. The second was put right in one conversation.

Then the miracle happened. God became real. A new radiance possessed the life of this girl. Her Christianity became contagious and has remained so ever since. If you are looking for God and have tried many ways and found no sense of reality, may it not be that, at some point, your relations with men are wrong? Perhaps the very finest thing you could do this week would be to write a letter and put things right with someone, with whom, at present, you are wrong.

In certain cases, of course, restitution cannot be made. The person wronged has passed away or has gone from the neighborhood and we cannot find his whereabouts. If this is the case, our restitution must surely be a dedication of ourselves to the prevention and cure of that evil in other cases which we cannot rectify in our own case. Our own sin, which we cannot now put right, must lead to a deep sympathy with those who are tempted where we fell and a new passion to remedy the havoc made by this particular sin when committed by other people. That now may be the only way we can make restitution. Before restitution is made guidance must be obtained, and one of the principles which will operate will be whether good is going to be done, or whether the one who has done wrong is getting a personal release from the burden of his sin at the expense of the victim, who, by an act of so-called restitution, may be called upon to bear more than he was already bearing through the offense.

At the same time do not let us say too readily,

"Well, all my cases are cases where more harm than good would be done by my attempt to make restitution." When Frank Buchman, the founder of the Oxford Group Movement, was converted, he immediately wrote six letters to the members of his church whom he felt he had wronged, telling them that he had wronged them and asking for their forgiveness. He got few replies, but he did get a tremendous sense of personal release. Those who have read *For Sinners Only* must have been thrilled by the chapter headed "Restitution." Doctor Buchman says that he opened the first house-party he ever organized in China by admitting that he had traveled on a railway making use of a concession to which he was not entitled. He felt that before he spoke about Christ to the people who had gathered, he had to admit this dishonesty and send back the money involved. He tells us that this act immediately induced two people in the room to admit things which were standing in the way of their religious experience, which they proceeded to put right, and they at once entered into a tremendous sense of the power of Christ.

Believe me, it is no good saying: "Well, I wronged so-and-so, but I shall get over it." There are some things that time does not heal; in fact, the idea that time is a great healer contains as much error as truth. Time does not put right a suppurating appendix, or a repressed complex, or a sense of guilt. All three require surgical help—the first that of the body, the second that of the

mind, the third that of the soul. The sense of guilt requires the surgery of making restitution.

One is driven to the belief that the poignancy of hell is the memory of injuries to others, which we could have put right once, but which now we cannot put right. As the poet said:

The ghosts of forgotten actions
 Came floating before my sight,
 And the things that I thought were dead things
 Were alive with a terrible might,
 And the vision of all my past life
 Was a dreadful thing to face
 Alone, alone with my conscience
 In that strange and fearful place.

Let me close by telling you one of the most beautiful stories I have ever heard.³

There was once a little brownie, misshapen and ugly, who did so want to be a fairy. He overheard the fairies talking one day, and they said that if little brownies went on doing kind and lovely things, they would turn into fairies.

Our little brownie had two great treasures. One was a wheelbarrow, a tiny wheelbarrow which he used to push into gardens, that he might collect slugs and snails, put them in his barrow, wheel them away, and bury them. No one knew of the

³I hope I am not infringing any copyright in briefly telling this beautiful story, but I regret that I cannot now trace the author. I found it in a booklet given by a friend of mine to my children. The booklet is published by The Challenge Limited, 92 Great Russell Street, W.C. 1., and the title page only contains the information: "A Pilgrim in Fairyland presents Little Brownie and Other Stories."

work he did, but he did it because it was a kind thing to do. Also he would go through the woods collecting acorns, and he would put them into the hollows of the trees for the squirrels to find, but the squirrels never knew that anybody was doing all this for them, and the weeks and the months went on and our little brownie was still a brownie.

The other possession the brownie had was a wonderful little green blanket. One day the queen of all the fairies had driven through the woods in her chariot and when she went over a bump in the ground the little green blanket fell out. The little brownie fully meant to take it back to her palace, and then he said to himself: "She must have plenty of blankets and this would keep me so lovely and warm on winter nights." So he wrapped it round him and slept.

But there was a longing in the heart of the brownie, even greater than his longing to be a fairy, and that was to see the King of all the world. For the fairies told him that you cannot sing like the birds, or be beautiful like the flowers, or be merry like the squirrels, until you have seen the King of all the world. And they told him, in the forest, that every morning at dawn the King came down through the forest. They said it was wonderful to see him, because the tall trees bent down their branches to greet him, and the flowers lifted up their faces to worship him, and the birds sang with greater rapture to greet him. They said his eyes were like stars, and his crown was full of jewels, and his face was more glorious than the

sun. The brownie tried so hard to waken by dawn, but he could never waken in time, however hard he tried.

One day the brownie was sitting on a log, very tired and downhearted, and a shepherd came through the forest with a little lamb asleep in his arms. When the shepherd saw the brownie he came and sat down by him. "Little brownie," he said, "you are very tired and I am tired, too, for I have been seeking for this little lamb who was lost." "O shepherd," said the brownie, "have you ever seen the King of all the world?" The shepherd said, "Why do you ask that, little brownie?" "Because I want to see him," said the brownie, "but I can never wake up in time." Then the shepherd smiled, a gentle and understanding smile, and said, "I wonder if it has something to do with your little green blanket?" And the shepherd put his hand on the brownie's shoulder and said, "Little brownie, it is worth everything to see the King of all the world! Will you try?"

Then the little brownie had a great fight with himself. He wanted to keep the blanket, but he could not forget the face of the shepherd, and a new desire was born in his heart as strong as his desire to see the King. "If only I could be his shepherd boy," he said, "and live with him always." Then he remembered what the shepherd had said about the green blanket, and suddenly he took it up in his arms and ran through the forest until he came to the palace of the queen. He knocked at the door, a fat little footman came to

it, the little brownie hurled the green blanket at him and scampered off.

That night the little brownie got into his hollow tree where he used to sleep. He was so cold. He could not sleep at all. And yet he felt such a happiness inside him. He was awake in time for the dawn that morning and it was more wonderful than he ever dreamed. The birds sang in worship, the trees began to wave their branches, the flowers lifted up their heads and the King came through the wood. His hair was like gold, his eyes were of deepest blue, and they shone like stars. His crown was full of rubies—or were they drops of blood that glistened on the golden spikes? His face was fairer than the sunlight. The little brownie just gazed, and gazed, and gazed, and, to his astonishment, when the King came to his tree, he stopped and said: "I am so glad that you are awake this morning, little brownie." Then the King did a more wonderful thing still. He took the little brownie in his arms and held him very close until he felt warm and comforted. Then the King said to the brownie: "Would you like to be a fairy?" And the brownie said: "No! I would like to be your shepherd boy and be with you forever." And the King of all the world touched him, and the ugly little brownie was turned into a fine, strong shepherd boy.

In the gardens people wondered why the snails and slugs were so numerous. In the woods the squirrels wondered why it had become so hard to find nuts. No one noticed in the hollow, at the

base of a great tree, a tiny wheelbarrow overgrown with moss. But away in fairyland you might have found the happiest boy in the world keeping sheep for the shepherd he adored. They say that his song is the gladdest song in fairyland and that his face shines with the glory of the King.

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But *first*, he had to send back the little green blanket.

CHAPTER VIII
WITNESS

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

—SAINT JOHN.

CHAPTER VIII

WITNESS

PROVOST ERSKINE HILL, of Saint Andrew's Cathedral, Aberdeen, recently told the following story: Two men had been partners in business in one of the great cities. One man was a regular attender at church; the other professed no religion at all. It was a Sunday morning and they met in the same tram, the one on his way to church, the other to play golf. As they separated the latter said to his companion, "Look here, So-and-So, when are you going to give up all this hypocrisy about religion and churchgoing?" "I don't understand you," said the other. "I mean just what I say, when are you going to give up this hypocrisy?" Much offended his companion answered, "What right have you to call my religion hypocrisy?" "Well," said the other, "we have been partners for twenty years. We have met and talked together every day. You know quite well that if what you profess to believe is true, it is a very hopeless case for me, and yet you have never said one word to help me to be anything different."

I was very much impressed when I heard that story because I cannot but feel that the logic is irresistible. If Christ really does mean to us everything, if through our contact with him we have

entered into a new experience of wonder and delight, so that the old, gray, dull, monotonous world has given place to an experience of joy, serenity, power, and love for others—four things which I do not quote haphazard, but regard as tests of a real experience—then surely, at least, we should long to pass it on to others.

I shall never forget, during the recent Uniting Conference in London, being introduced to a young and very brilliant doctor who is making a number of experiments in a laboratory attached to the university. His work is nothing less important than cancer research. At present he is experimenting with mice and his experiments have the backing of some of the most distinguished scientists in London. I watched him at work in a small, ill-ventilated room at the top of the building. Like nearly all researchers he is terribly handicapped for money. Yet I shall never forget the glow in his face, the enthusiasm of his voice, the shining of his eyes, as he tried to make clear to my stumbling lay mind the significance of the experiments he was conducting. "You see," he said, "if we can do this and that and the other, if these experiments turn out as successfully as we have a right to hope, then it is possible we may have a new way of treating this particular type of cancer with some hope of recovery. And then," he said in tones which I cannot reproduce, "we shall tell the public."

The Christian, if he really is a Christian, is not only a researcher, he is one who can say, "I have

found the remedy." Further, he is supposed to have found a remedy for a disease that in the eyes of God is worse than cancer—SIN. I must confess that I know very few people, though they are supposed to be Christian people, whose faces shine with the glow of their discovery and who say within themselves, "And now I can tell other people."

If there is a flaw in this argument, I hope someone will point it out to me. I cannot find it, however bitter its conclusion, for it convicts nearly all of us of slackness. For a short time I served on a Cancer Research Committee and read a good deal of the literature and heard stories which would get between any man and his sleep. Until at last it seemed as though in one's dreams one could see a vast concourse of men and women tortured by this agonizing disease, with anguish written upon their faces; men and women holding out their arms and crying to us, "Can't you do anything to ease our anguish and lessen our pain?" And always someone had to write back and say: "We are very sorry. There is not anything we can do. We do not know what to suggest, but as soon as we know we will let you know."

But do we not see, in our dreams, a great multitude of men and women beaten by sin, enslaved by it, held down by it, defeated and made miserable and wretched by it, and they hold out their arms to the Christian Church, saying: "Cannot you do anything? Is not there any way out of this sin which, more than anything else in the world,

spoils life?" And do we not say that we have been Christians for five, ten, fifteen, twenty years? And yet many of us are compelled to admit that never once have we lifted voice or pen or hand, or made one gesture to offer a sin-smitten soul the gospel that we say has changed us and is the most important thing in the world.

Why don't we do it? I want to suggest four reasons, and in contemplating them let us ask ourselves whether the time has not come when we can overcome them.

The first is reticence. It is, of course, for many people, an exceedingly difficult thing to unveil the inner parts of their spiritual life. I would go so far in sympathy with them as to say that some of the best people I know find it the hardest thing in the world to speak of their own religious experience to another. At the same time, supposing this very reticent person were sitting in a room with a friend, and supposing the reticent person knew that his friend was suffering from some disease of a particularly private nature of which he himself had been cured, would he not, in the spirit of fellowship, speak to his friend of the way in which he himself had found life and health again? Or, if even that were too much to ask, would he not write him a letter, would he not lend him a book, would he not take some step to bring that friend into the way of health? I am not going to ask of people who are terribly shy and reticent that they should go rushing about talking religion to all sorts of people. It is as difficult for them as it is

easy for others; and it is absurd to make standards of Christian conduct which demand the same *method* of doing a necessary thing irrespective of the nature and temperament of the people concerned. But I am going to ask those reticent friends to take some other life and to besiege it first in prayer, not only prayer for the person they are besieging, but prayer for guidance for themselves that they may be guided to help others without becoming burglars of their souls and without offense—praying to be given the right word at the right moment and trying to establish with that other person that atmosphere of fellowship in which difficult things can be said.

Let me speak for myself. I should find it hard to go into another man's house and open a conversation about religion, but when fellowship has been established and re-established, and we have sat over a fire together and gradually opened our hearts to one another, not in the spirit of one who is telling another what he should do, but in the spirit of those friends who exchange experiences, it does become possible to say things about one's own inner life which, in another atmosphere, would be impossible to oneself and an outrage on other people. I do think the Christian is committed to this ministry.

Let me pass to a second reason why we do not try to bring others to Christ. It is the fear of being thought a hypocrite and considering ourselves better than others. One of the things one most admires in the British character is this fear and

hatred of hypocrisy. Yet this fear can hold us back from doing things that we ought to do. To profess nothing may make it easy to live up to one's profession; but it is a negative and anæmic Christianity. Quite honestly, I think a number of splendid men are kept away from attendance at church because to be known as a churchgoer is to be labeled, and they genuinely fear that they cannot live up to their label and would thus expose themselves among their business and professional friends to the charge of hypocrisy. I do wish I could get it across to such men that we are all sinners who are seeking a new way of life. If only our churchgoing could be seen to be not the mark of the person who feels himself superior, but, rather, indeed, the opposite, the mark of a man who acknowledges his need of help in this difficult business of living! So our attitude to those whom we wish to help should not be that of any kind of superiority, for surely spiritual pride is one of the most deadly sins. Jesus thought it was far worse than adultery. Our attitude should be: "I have found something that helps me to live, and I want to pass it on to you."

For this reason I do not think we should wait until we are what is called "converted," or what the Oxford Group calls "changed," before we begin to make contacts with others. I wish, in the spirit of fellowship, beginning with one friend, there could be a quest together. Two people, not one of them superior to the other, but going hand in hand looking for a new way of life. I suggest

that to everybody as a way of bringing others to Christ.

The third reason that makes it so difficult is that most of us have been put off badly by the vulgarity of those glib and terrible people who burgle our souls by some such question as, "Are you saved?" Many who certainly have a vital experience outrage some people who are looking for God because the method used is an insufferable intrusion into personality, and definitely puts people off the whole business of religion. In the case of individual dealing with people I do think it is important to be sure that fellowship is established first. And even when that is established, to remember that one of the fruits of the spirit is tact, and that it is always better to say, humbly, "This is what I have found," rather than to say, "This is what you have got to do."

But we have left out the most important reason why bringing others to Christ is difficult. Must we not honestly say that, for a good many of us, the real reason is we have nothing worth passing on? I do not want to hurt anybody's feelings, but I do want us to be perfectly honest with ourselves. Have you really got something, from your contact with Christ, that is worth passing on? In the days of his flesh the great enemy of Christianity was religion. It was the religious people who crucified Jesus, and the condemnations of Jesus came down most heavily on those who were religious people. And the simple truth, whether we like it or not, is that religion can be a substitute

for Christianity. Will you ask yourself this: "Is my experience one of a vague religious sense, say, that there is a God, a purpose behind all things, an inspired Bible, a historic person called Christ whose teaching I admire and whose personality I love, or is it Christianity?" Is it, in other words, that you are committed to a way of life, that you are entering more and more fully into a living and definite experience with Christ which is changing your life? If it is the first, you have nothing to pass on. If it is the second, you cannot, however reticent, but long to find some way or another in which others can be brought into that experience which is changing you.

And may I add this word in all tenderness? You may have had a living experience of Christ twenty years ago, you may then have made an act of surrender. Are you pretending to yourself that, therefore, all is well, when your experience is no longer living, but is the memory of something that happened long ago?

Do let us take this matter of our relation to others seriously. No man is fully won to Christ unless his personality is reaching out to bring others into the experience. It is incredible that we can possess the real thing and keep it as dark as some of us keep our religion. After all, a chill falls upon the spirit if one contemplates what would have happened if the earliest Christians of all had done no more to spread their experience than we have done. Suppose they had settled down in Jerusalem, a little body of men and

women meeting together every week in the upper room, exchanging experiences, worshiping together, singing hymns, listening to sermons from one another. The Christian Church would have been extinct within half a century of Christ's death.

But what did happen at once? They went throughout the known world preaching this glorious good news, that there was transforming communicable experience of salvation for every man and woman. Nor did they say to themselves what I have heard people say, "Very well then, I suppose I had better begin to tell others." The thing simply burst from them. They could not keep it in.

Let me just add two true stories. During the last six months many people in my church have found a new experience of Christ. I think of one young man concerning whom I felt deeply troubled for many months. He complained bitterly of the power of a certain sin over him and grew almost desperate in his search for Christ. He even got quite bitter when he heard other people talking about their experiences. "Such things never happen to me," he said, and I felt almost desperate. I tried all the ways I knew to get him to take what was offered and I miserably failed. And then it happened. I tease him now because he can no more explain to me how it happened to him than I could explain to him how it happened to other people. I am quoting his case for this reason—that as soon as he got through I had

a letter from him the gist of which was this: "When you have other men coming to you with my problem, will you let me help them? Life is so thrilling now that I must long to help other people and I think I can do it. Will you let me try?"

The only other case I will allow myself to quote is that of a young girl, shy and reticent, who, within the last few weeks, has found Christ. She was persuaded to go to another church to help start a group very similar to the one at my own church. I quote her actual words without asking her permission: "Last night I went with the other Brunswick fellowship people to the meeting at X. I really think I enjoyed myself more than I have ever done before. Even after all you have said in sermons, and talks, about wanting to pass it on once you have got the real thing, I do not think I ever thought it possibly true for me. But I am definitely certain I wanted to last night. It helped me tremendously to do it and gave me such an exhilarating feeling." There is not the slightest doubt that to bring others to Christ is not only, as it were, to haul our flag to the top of the mast, but I know nothing that so strengthens our own faith or so deepens our experience as does service of this kind.

If Christ were here in the flesh, how easy it would be to bring others to him! With gladness we should go and bring this friend and that, that they might receive from him what we have received. And he would receive us. He would

understand us. He would know what to do with us. He would tell us where to begin.

He is here in the flesh no longer. That beloved voice cannot be heard. The face we would give so much to see cannot be seen. That hand will not rest on our shoulder, sending a thrill through every nerve in our body.

But with a faith and daring which were divine, he intrusted his work to men and women who should come after him and who, for love of him and for what they themselves found in him, should carry on his work. Still, in quiet moments, those people hear a voice coming down the ages: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring. And they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, one shepherd."

Hearing that voice, some have crossed the sea. But these other sheep are all round us. And what an urgency is in the voice that calls! "*I must bring.*" The cross itself is the symbol of that dear urgency. We cannot escape it and still call ourselves by his name. A great cry goes up from the hearts of men and women. It is differently expressed, but its burden is the same: "We would see Jesus." Christ is depending on us. The world is depending on us. If we will surrender our lives to him, accept his pardon and grace, spend time in daily communion with him, and seek to do his will in all things, making such restitution as is necessary and submitting ourselves to his guidance, he will use us to declare, with confidence, the things we have seen and heard and

experienced. He will show us, day by day, when to speak and when to be silent. He will show us how to establish fellowship and how to make contact with other people.

Teach me the wayward feet to stay
And guide them in the homeward way.

This will be our prayer. And he with his understanding of personality and his respect for personality, without demanding more than we can do or suffering us to wound another, will show us how to pass on the best news that human ears can ever hear.

CHAPTER IX
THE BURDEN OF GOD

I sometimes think about the cross
And shut my eyes and try to see
The cruel nails and crown of thorns,
And Jesus crucified for me.

But even could I see him die
I could but see a little part
Of that great love which, like a fire,
Is always burning in his heart.

—WILLIAM WALSHAM HOW.

CHAPTER IX

THE BURDEN OF GOD

I SHOULD like this series of addresses to include a message about the cross, because there we find the true motive and the true power of the gospel. The true motive of the Christian life is not that the Christian may have peace, and power, and joy, and love, but that he may show forth the glory of God and share the burden of God. We are not to win others in order to make the world into a glorified kind of garden city, where conditions are happy all round and everybody is content.

I think it is beyond us to see this matter completely, but a true view must at least contain a vision of the terrible burden which God bears in all the sin and suffering and wrong of the world, and our motive must not be one which begins and ends in ourselves or in the thought of a world made happier for others. Our motive, which itself comes from God, must run out to some conception of entering into the fellowship of his sufferings. Let me work this out a little more fully.

A little boy once asked his mother the question: "Mummy, is God everywhere?" "Yes, dear," she said, "everywhere." "Then," said John, triumphantly, clapping his hand over his teacup, "I've

got a bit of him in here." We smile at the story. We don't always remember that we cannot put our hand down over a church, as it were, or a world, or a universe. He is not here or there or anywhere, for these are spatial words and do not apply to spirit. When we use spatial words, as we are bound to do, we mean that God is everywhere available and by his immanence we mean that he is always trying to express himself in the things he has made.

In the measure in which these things can express him they do express him. The song of the lark in the sky, the murmur of the sea at night—beauty of sound; the curve in the stem of a harebell and the contour of Everest—beauty of form; the flaming splendors of sunset and the "little speedwell's darling blue"—beauty of color, are translations into sound, form, and color of the joy of God. Similarly, a good deed is a translation into human action of the divine nature and a true thought is a projection of a divine idea. Similarly, the splendor of the immanent God breaks out of its prison when men's hands and hearts produce anything true or good or beautiful. One who afterward became a Christian said that before this great change the Ninth Symphony taught him that there was everlasting joy at the heart of reality.

But if God expresses himself in all that is beautiful, true, and good in the universe, he must be most fully immanent in that which least hinders his expression; in that vehicle of expression which is most like his own nature, man. And if God is

injured wherever there is disharmony in his universe—and Jesus teaches us that God shares the pain of a sparrow's fall—then he is most injured where that disharmony is most poignant, because the expression is fullest there, namely, in man, man's sorrow and suffering and sin. God is so immanent that he is identified with and implicated in all the disharmony, and the sins of men are the wounds of God.

This is surely the meaning of Zwiller's great picture in Paris called "The First Night Outside Paradise." Adam and Eve are not gazing at the distant figure of the Angel guarding, with flaming sword, the way to Eden. The artist has painted high in the darkening heavens the luminous outline of a cross. They are gazing wonderingly at that. For in a true sense the cross was raised up then and the first sin was the first nail. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.

We have stood on some dark winter night and watched a comet. We say one day, "It has come," and on another, "It has gone." But quite likely it began that journey before we were born and will end it after we are dead. Just for a few seconds it came near enough and under special conditions of atmosphere for us to see it. So with the cross. That grim tragedy was seen of men and man provided the terrible atmosphere. But it was the translation into terms of history of a fact in the nature of God from everlasting to everlasting. God carries an eternal burden because he is immanent and loving. Only in 29 A. D. he came near

enough that we might see—what man can see—of a burden which no man hath seen or can see, even the pain which is in the bosom of the Father. Indeed, I often think that man was allowed to watch the physical sufferings of our Lord so that, fastening on these, there should be veiled from him the vision which no man could see and live, the vision of the agony of God.

If we could *know* from without, the suffering, sorrow, and sin of a tiny hamlet, we should break down. If we knew it from within, we should go mad. God knows from within, is implicated in and identified with all the suffering, sorrow, and sin of all the world through all the ages. Immanence means that “in all our afflictions he is afflicted,” that what men suffer is a faint reflection of what he suffers and “inasmuch” as men do wrong to one another they do it unto him.

Here is a loving father whose boy is living a wastrel life in a great city. We watch the father’s hair whiten, his face become drawn and lined, his shoulders become bowed, his gait feeble. His son’s sins are bringing him down by reason of their burden. Anyone who further injures the soul of that boy aims a yet greater blow at his father. But the father, however sympathetic and involved, is *outside* the boy. “How much more shall your heavenly Father” bear that burden! He is purer and therefore more sensitive to sin. And he is *inside* the boy. Still “wounded for our transgression.” No longer will I ask petulantly of any human tragedy, “Why does God allow this

to happen?" I will at least complete the question: "Why does God allow this to happen *to himself*?" "Oh, who am I, that for my sake, my Friend should bear my load and carry my sorrows and be stabbed with my sins?"

Sometimes, on some errand of love, I go to the slums or some foul den of thieves or some haunt of evil. I pity. I sympathize. I try to help. God forgive me, I can hardly keep from patronage. Then I come home. I bathe. I eat. I sleep. *But he stays there.* He is still in that foul den, that slum, that brothel. Or, if my work take me elsewhere, still he is in that quarrelsome home, that fear-stricken heart, that churchman's insolent, proud little soul. He, my Lord, is still crucified there. Still trying to rise again; still guarding that last strip of territory in a personality seemingly captured by the enemy, still tending that spark underneath the ashes when to my view the fire is wholly extinguished; still holding up the reed when it is broken and crushed and has no human strength left in it:

Softly He touches, for the reed is slender;
Wisely enkindles, for the flame is low.

How well I remember visiting a leper settlement in India!—speaking to the lepers, spending the day with them, and then—having sympathized and done any small thing or said any small word to help—I went to my bungalow, changed my clothes, and sat down to dinner. But when Jesus saw a leper he became a leper. He did not, of

course, develop the symptoms. But which is the worse part of disease, the physical symptom or the psychological syndrome—what it feels like to be a leper? The latter is the worse—the loneliness, the mental anguish, the sense of being an outcast. Jesus did not sympathize merely. Certainly he did not patronize. Nor did he bend down in pity, as one who says, “Yes, I know what he feels.” He *felt* it all. He identified himself with all the horror of it until he could get his shoulder under the burden and lift and dispel it forever.

And when Christ saw the adulteress—if you can bear it—he became an adulteress. Not the one who commits sin. But one who knows the shame of it all, the self-loathing that follows; knows it better than the sinner, for purity knows more of the nature of sin than sin knows, for sin blinds the eyes of the sinner to the nature of his own sin.

Even Saint Paul can hardly find words for this awesome message. “Him who knew no sin *he made to be sin on our behalf.*” He was identified with all that is most beastly and revolting and disgusting in human life. And out there beyond the gate he went identifying himself with it, bearing it for us, nailing it to his cross.

“Christ in me the hope of glory,” says Saint Paul. And when I think of Saint Paul, it sounds true—Christ expressing himself through that magnificent courage, that indomitable spirit, that tireless energy, that eloquent voice, that amazing brain. But the other night I saw, in the nameless quarter of a sordid little town, an old man in rags,

with red syphilitic eyes, go reeling down the street on God knows what errand, and in my heart I said, "‘Christ in him the hope of glory’": the only hope, for he has no will, no decency, no pure desire of his own left.

Some thinkers, contemplating the degradation to which men can sink, have felt forced to the doctrine of annihilation. It cannot be. Where is the line to be drawn? Can God be defeated? Crucified, yes, but triumphant. Searching is the Good Shepherd for his lost sheep *until he find it*. "They shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." The coin will not be left in the dust to ultimately disintegrate. It bears the image of the King. It is part of his treasure. And where his treasure is there will his heart be also.

The early church knew the challenge and appeal of this theme. Its preachers said little about the human life of Jesus. Nice little discourses on imitating his life were a late development. It is always the cross. "We preach Christ crucified." "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." God forbid that I should glory save in the cross. They saw the burden God carried and got their shoulder underneath it, entering into the fellowship of his sufferings. And they knew that because God bore it, men's sins had been faced and dealt with and done for. Men who would accept what God had done were saved. So the apostles did not talk of problems, but of the solution; not of improving conditions, but of saving men and women; not of

social reform, but of salvation for all. We now have numerous conferences, better and better brains, richer experience, more scientific discoveries—and are still in a hopeless mess, because we are leaving out the note of redemption which only a suffering God can achieve.

If the thought of God's burden doesn't make us hate sin, I doubt if anything else will. If I am selfish or impure, I am striking a blow in the face of the greatest Lover of my soul. If I am mean to a man, beastly to a woman, heartless to a child, I shall hear sooner or later a Voice that speaks that awful word "Inasmuch"—"You did that to *me*. It was I that you wounded. It was my burden that you made heavier."

If the thought of God's burden doesn't send us out to change the world in his name and for his sake, I doubt if anything else will. In the cross even God has spoken the last word. Even he cannot speak more plainly than he spoke at Calvary. But if we respond, his voice shall speak that glad word "Inasmuch." For never in all our lives have we given so much as a cup of cold water to one of his little ones, but we did something to slake his burning and eternal thirst.

QUESTIONNAIRE

CHAPTER I

SURRENDER

1. Is one surrender of the life to Christ sufficient?
2. What are the tests of reality in the Christian life?
3. What are the "dugouts" in which we hide from God?
4. Have we received anything from Christ which is worth exporting?
5. If the infant church had been made up of people like us, how far would it have spread through the world?
6. Is it well to make it known that you have surrendered your life to Christ?

CHAPTER II

SHARING

1. What principles would guide you whether to share with others: (1) Your sins; (2) Your experience of Christ?
2. How would you help a man who says the experience of forgiveness is not real to him?
3. What are the chief dangers of sharing? How can they be avoided?

4. Where is Rome right and where wrong in the practice of confession?
5. Ought we under any circumstances to reveal what is shared with us; for example, the confession of a crime punishable by law?

CHAPTER III

THE QUIET TIME

1. Is it enough to pray when we feel like it?
2. Does a prayer like "God bless China" make any difference?
3. Suggest practical ways of praying for missionary work.
4. John Smith says he knows all the tips as to how to spend the Quiet Time, but still he only prays at intervals. What would you say to him?
5. Mary Jones says she doesn't feel any different if she does pray. What is the place of feeling in this matter?
6. How can prayer make a difference in a universe ruled by laws? Isn't it like praying for a robot to turn green?

CHAPTER IV

FELLOWSHIP

1. Is there such a thing as a Christian who never joins in fellowship?

2. "But my class meeting gives me the hump."
Discuss this rude remark.
3. Discuss the future of the church in regard to fellowship.
4. Ought every missionary on the field to feel part of a fellowship of prayer and love and knowledge at home? How could we do this?
5. "The sustained will to live the life of fellowship, despite any coldness or crankiness that tends to chill or break spiritual unity, is the foundation of the church's life and is bound in the long run to achieve the end desired."¹
Discuss this.

CHAPTER V

GUIDANCE

1. What constitutes "a missionary call"?
2. Can I be sure what the will of God is? But suppose I afterward feel that I made a mistake?
3. But can the Creator of the universe really be interested in my little life? What is the basis of assurance?
4. Gladys Thompson would like to be a missionary, but she has an aged father and mother to look after. Sometimes a voice says, "For-sake them." Sometimes it seems a clear duty

¹ *Fellowship in Thought and Prayer*. Mathews and Bisseker, p. 97.

to stand by them. Can we help her to find the will of God?

5. Does God guide a Hindu? If so, how? What have we more than others?

CHAPTER VI

THE WILL OF GOD

1. Is our problem to know God's will or to do it?
2. Was Jesus always sure of the will of God? Discuss his cry: "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt."
3. How would you talk to an Eastern about "kismet" or fate?
4. Is it true that there is nothing capable *ultimately* of (1) defeating the dedicated human spirit; (2) defeating God?

CHAPTER VII

RESTITUTION

1. Can you be right with God and wrong with your neighbor? But who is my neighbor? When Jesus was asked that question, he told a story about a "foreigner." So is the world-vision necessary to personal religion?
2. "God has no favorites." Discuss this.
3. Do you think you could live among outcasts without being patronizing? What would help you most?

4. Ought we to feel that personal missionary service is incumbent upon us partly that we may make restitution for the sins of statesmen and soldiers, and the exploitation of our brothers overseas?

CHAPTER VIII

WITNESS

1. Are we winning others to Christ in our own land? If not, do we think we should do better in India or China or the West Indies? Why?
2. "I feel too shy to talk about my religion," says Mabel Huggins. What would you say to her?
3. "Dash it all, a chap can't gas about religion in his office!" says Jack Higgins. What would you say to him?
4. "No words are needed. The life will speak for itself." Is this always true or is it sheer cowardice?
5. Should we use education or medical help as a bribe with which to win people to Christ?
6. Should we wait until we are converted before we seek to convert others?
7. Is missionary giving at home sometimes an attempt to hide from God ourselves by paying for others to be offered what we have evaded?

CHAPTER IX

THE BURDEN OF GOD

1. Distinguish between immanence and pantheism.
2. What exactly is the meaning of not a sparrow falleth "to the ground without your Father"?
3. Discuss the view of the cross described on pp. 141-42.
4. What is the meaning of "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf"?
5. "The apostles did not speak of social reform, but of salvation for all." Discuss this. Should the church interest herself in social reform or concentrate on getting individuals into a right relationship with God? What was the attitude of Jesus?

